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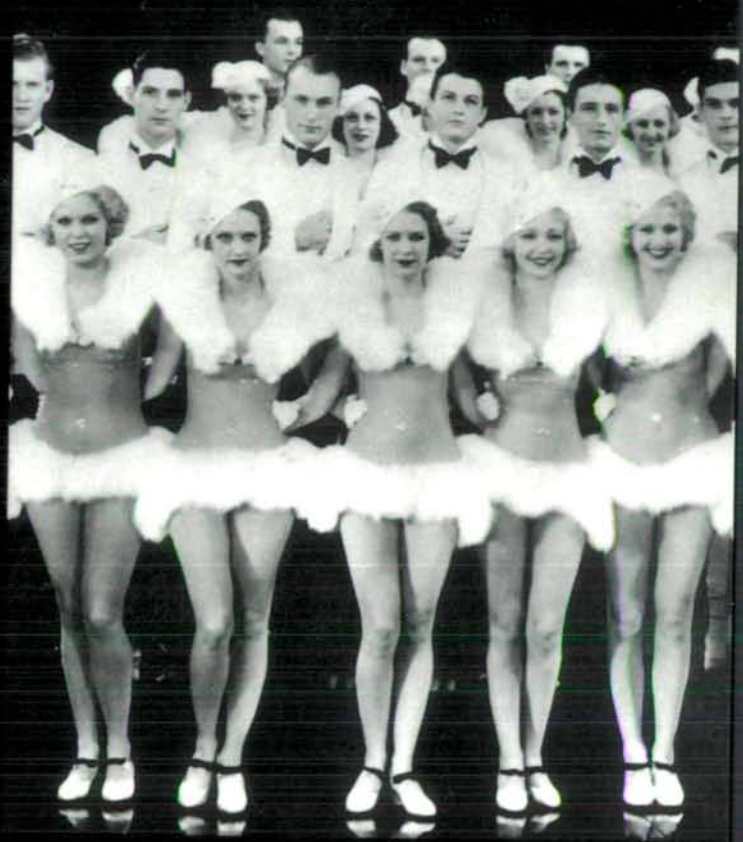

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Congratulations are offered to Laura Marks, Carleton University, who was judged runner-up in the Katherine Singer Kovacs Essay Award for her *Screen* article 'Video haptics and erotics', vol. 39, no. 4 (1998), pp. 331–48.

cover illustration
42nd Street (Lloyd Bacon, 1933).
Picture courtesy: BFI Stills.

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Jurassic post-Fordism: tall tales of economics in the theme park

CONSTANCE BALIDES

If it's not Jurassic Park, *it's extinct.*[1]

A profile of the toothed visage of a stylized tyrannosaurus dinosaur and across its body, like a banner in stone-age script, the words 'Jurassic Park'. By now, this image, the logo of *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), must be lodged within the commercial unconscious. It appears throughout the film as part of the mise-en-scene of the diegetic world of the dinosaur theme park, and it was stamped on one thousand merchandized products circulating outside the film.[2] The tyrannosaurus rex (T rex) logo is also a brand name that reemerges according to the logic of the afterlife of contemporary film, involving a periodic visibility linked to the video release (October 1994), the first and latest commercial television airings (NBC, 7 May 1995 and 1 January 2000), and the sequel, *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, May 1997) and its video (November 1997). A year after the release of *Jurassic Park*, ninety-eight per cent of the adult population in the USA alone had heard of the film 25.2 times.[3]

The *Jurassic Park* phenomenon supports important claims in Janet Wasko's *Hollywood in the Information Age*. For Wasko, 'popular films often initiate or continue an endless chain of other cultural products', and the projection of films in cinema theatres involves only one among many possible formats and reception sites.[4] A key implication of this work is that contemporary film is not a discrete entity. Its borders extend beyond its own form to other commodities.

Contemporary economics is one framework for assessing these

1 MCA/Universal's slogan for merchandising products affiliated with the film.

2 For figures on merchandising, see Jeff Giles with Donna Foote, 'Coming to a toy store near you: is the dinosaur sales blitz aimed at kids too young for such a scary movie?', *Newsweek*, no. 14 (June 1993), p. 64; William Grimes, 'More dinosaurs! Stalk on', *New York Times*, 25 June 1993, p. C28; Leonard Klady, 'Billion-dollar dinos' merchandizing mania', *Variety*, 4 October 1993, p. 12; 'Jurassic schlock', *Harper's*, no. 286 (June 1993), p. 37; and Janet Wasko, *Hollywood in the Information Age: Beyond the Silver Screen* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 204–5. By 1994, 500 licensees marketed 5,000 products with licensed merchandised sales of $1 billion. See Marcy Magiera, 'Promotional marketer of the year', *Advertising Age*, 21 March 1994, p. S-8.

3 Release dates are for the USA. On the extensive name recognition of the film, see Peter M. Nichols, 'How corporate allies in marketing hope to give "Jurassic Park" a profile as high as T Rex', *New York Times*, 10 June 1994, p. B12.

4 Wasko, *Hollywood in the Information Age*, p. 4. Also see Douglas Gomery, 'Toward a new media economics', in David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (eds), *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 407–18.

conditions. 'Post-Fordism'[5] designates the latest phase (since the 1970s) of capitalist development that includes flexible patterns of production (flexible specialization), economies of scope (small batch production of a wide variety of products, and retailing organized around integrated product ranges), the importance of service and knowledge industries, and changes in the structure of consumption.[6] For Robin Murray, for example, consumption in a post-Fordist era is organized through the market-niching of highly differentiated consumer groups and is increasingly characterized in terms of life-styles effecting an 'anthropology of consumption'.[7] The extensive merchandizing of *Jurassic Park* products aimed at a differentiated children's market can be assessed in these terms.

While the economic imperatives of *Jurassic Park* are condensed in the image of the T rex, the interpretive resonance of the film lies in the direction of a different image – the theme park – and another debate – postmodernism. In discussions of contemporary cultural life, the theme park often figures as a metaphor for the extensive reach of commerce and for simulation as a general mode of experience. It also stands at the divide between a nostalgic modernism with a desire for auratic art, earlier forms of democratic public life and authentic historical consciousness, and a critical postmodernism which acknowledges the derivative nature of cultural forms and the implication of the mass media in the public sphere where public opinions, including history, are formed.[8] For the former, the theme park is synonymous with a debasement of contemporary public and political life; for the latter, it is an instance of its mediated character.

Jurassic Park hyperbolizes the mediation of contemporary life by linking the question of history to the problematic of authenticity in the context of commercialism. More precisely, the 'living biological attractions' of simulated but real dinosaurs cloned from 'dino' DNA in the film embody the annihilation and commercialization of historical time associated with a postmodern present. The film's theme park, which combines various institutions including natural history museum, amusement park, zoo, safari park and shop, elides boundaries between civic culture and cheap amusements, education and commerce, and the environmental real and the virtual real in a manner typical of the late twentieth century. In an apt postmodern inversion, the world outside the film, moreover, mirrored the world inside the film during the period of dinomania that accompanied *Jurassic Park*'s theatrical release. The American Museum of Natural History held an exhibition of 'The Dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park*' and served a $5.95 'Meal-O-Saurus' in its theme restaurant. A toll-free telephone number, 1 800 DINO COP, was available for reporting unlicensed product knock-offs in order to avoid product theft, which was a central plot issue in the film. Product tie-in arrangements between Universal and McDonald's – the fast food chain serving 'dinosized' hamburgers, drinks and french fries – made food a

5 While I will drop the quotation marks hereafter, I use them to emphasize that 'post-Fordism' does not mean post-capitalism, and to stress the fact of debate on the Left over the use of the term, especially the extent of continuity between post-Fordism and Fordism. For further debate, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1990); Eric Alliez and Michel Feher, 'The luster of capital', trans. Alyson Waters, *Zone*, vols 1/2 (1987), pp. 315–59; Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: Harper Business, 1994); Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, 'Hollywood for the 21st century: global competition for critical mass in image markets', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 16 (1992), pp. 1–22.

6 While I refer to issues of production and consumption here, contemporary changes also involve a restructuring of the labour market around core and peripheral workers, an undermining of organized labour and a move away from a Keynesian interventionist role for the state. Fordism is associated with mass production and consumption, organized labour and an interventionist nation-state, and refers to Henry Ford's introduction of a moving assembly line in the manufacture of the Model T during the 1910s and to the importance of making workers, through high wages, consumers.

7 Robin Murray, 'Life after Henry (Ford)', *Marxism Today* (October 1988), p. 11.

8 For the former, see Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism', *New Left Review*, vol. 146 (July–August 1984), pp. 53–93; and Michael Sorkin, 'Introduction: variations on a theme park' and 'See you in Disneyland', in Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park: the New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1992), pp. xi–xv, 205–32. For the latter, see Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss,

jurassic experience, and through its television advertisements, which directly referred to the film, illustrated Edward Soja's characterization of postmodernism as 'the new theme parks [that] now visit you'.[9]

Both the T rex and the theme park point to a cultural realm implicated in commercial relations. The problem for this study, however, is how to take account of *Jurassic Park* as *both* an economic phenomenon *and* a text that orchestrates its meanings through various formal strategies, addresses its spectators in particular ways and invites various cultural uses – in other words as a cultural text that does not simply reflect its conditions of production. To analyze *Jurassic Park* in this way means that it is inadequate to *defer* the question of the film's connection to an economy whose moment never arrives. Merchandizing, product tie-ins and product placements[10] point to a *Jurassic Park* thoroughly implicated in commercial practices. At the same time, it is insufficient to look at how economic factors of production *determine* representation, an approach that often involves an impoverished sense of textuality and results in the insufficient conclusion of the encroachment of commerce on the artistic integrity of a film.

One of the ways the film negotiates its postmodern thematics is, surprisingly, by criticizing the commercialism and simulation of its theme park. In order to address these concerns this essay asks how economic and textual systems of meaning are 'productive' in relation to each other. Or, more broadly, how can the relationship between the economy and culture be analyzed in a way that holds together the (not necessarily conclusive) economic determinations that form the productive field of a text and the (not simply autonomous) character of a text as a signifying system?[11] My argument is that the specific case of *Jurassic Park* involves various imbricated relations between economics and the film as a cultural text, one of which is the representation of economics in the film. Furthermore, strategies of representation in the film and in the representation of its commercial success make sense in the context of Annie L. Cot's assessment of the contemporary period as one involving the extension of economics as an authoritative discourse across the social fabric, an analysis to which I will return later in this essay.[12]

While the realms of the economy and culture are not easily separable, they often fall within distinct territories of scholarship and of pedagogy. In Film Studies, this separation results in a bifurcation between film as an industrial product and film as a text. While studies of the film industry, with important exceptions,[13] tend to give short shrift to a detailed analysis of films, contemporary semiotic and psychoanalytic film theories' attention to textual elements often suggests a necessary, rather than relative, autonomy of film from its actual conditions of production. To be sure, revisions of the singular textual subject have moved debate in important directions, including a diversified sense of women as spectators and a complex

Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983); and Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

9 See Grimes, 'More dinosaurs! Stalk on', p. C28; 'Ambushing goes to the movies', *Sales and Marketing Management* (September 1993), p. 69; and for the quote, see Edward Soja, 'Inside Exopolis: scenes from Orange County' in Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park*, p.121.

10 In *Hollywood in the Information Age* (ch. 8), Wasko usefully distinguishes between these terms. 'Merchandised products' are based on characters or objects in a film and involve licensing agreements, as well as the payment of royalties. 'Product placement' is the guaranteed placement of products by manufacturing companies in a film arranged through product placement firms or inhouse divisions within corporations. 'Product tie-ins' involve products unrelated to a film but associated with it through promotional campaigns. In the case of *Jurassic Park*, products using the T rex logo are merchandise and the link between Universal and McDonald's is a product tie-in. The lines are blurred, however, when merchandised products appear in the film itself through product placement, and when giveaway items like the McDonald's plastic collectors' cup bear images from the film and the T rex logo.

11 The reference to the argument in Louis Althusser's 'ISA's' essay concerning the relative autonomy of the ideological state apparatuses from the economic base is purposive. Semiotic and psychoanalytic film theories take a cue from Althusserian formulations, such as 'each of [the ideological state apparatuses] contributes towards this single result [the reproduction of the relations of production] in a way proper to it', to focus on culture and/or film as

understanding of various negotiated uses of films by particular groups. The question of the relationship between cultural and textual practices and economic conditions, however, is less frequently visible as a problem. Consumption, too, can suffer from too much autonomy. In an early critique of this tendency in Cultural Studies, Meaghan Morris problematizes an overvalorization of consumption as the only realm of complicated meanings, a view that also assumes a generalized and outdated sense of production. She argues instead for understanding consumption as 'one of the necessary, complex, variable *phases* of a productive process – which is no more autonomous from, than it is metonymic of, that process'.[14] More recently, Paul Smith criticizes a 'postmodernist' strand in Cultural Studies for 'conflat[ing] the civic and the cultural so that participation in cultural practices or even consumption of cultural artefacts actually becomes the postmodern equivalent of civic life'. For Smith, it is more useful to read cultural objects 'in a context of totality and its contradictions'.[15]

While the isolated text and hypertrophic consumption both constitute a withering of the social and political implications of culture, the point is not to reinvoke an approach that construes films as the products of the determining effects of the economic base (economism). The specific ways films produce meanings and have effects at the level of subjectivity remain central to the importance of studying them. But *Jurassic Park* complicates the issue. Its commercial intertextuality and its video and sequel afterlives extend the boundary of what constitutes a film, and its phenomenal success brings back the last instance of the economy with a vengeance. The specific circumstances of *Jurassic Park* militate against securing a textual boundary around the film or locating the spectator in a non-commercial text or treating the economy as a textual presence in overly generalized terms. *Jurassic Park* suggests the necessity of a more precise attention to its extra-textual and textual economies.

The manner of doing so raises another set of difficulties. Feminist work on post-Fordism and on postmodernism complicates the natural authority that economics as an explanatory framework seems to invoke. Linda McDowell, for example, points to aporias over women's labour in the post-Fordism debate. For Rosalyn Deutsche, David Harvey's work on the relationship between flexible accumulation and postmodernism misunderstands postmodern culture and feminist representational practices. This is because for Harvey, 'only one reality is truly deep', political economy holds the key to its analysis, and '"real" social relations [in the postmodern city] reside elsewhere – in, for instance, the economic circumstances of its production'.[16] These feminist critiques are a salutary reminder that economic analyses are neither epistemologically neutral nor transparent to their empirical objects. Economics, like other disciplinary fields, constructs its object through various exclusions,

relatively autonomous. The extent, however, to which theories of subjectivity in some work evacuate Althusser's concern for the institutional loci of ideology, whether relative autonomy can be extended to include a text, and the role of films in reproducing the relations of production continue to be important questions. Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)', in Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127–86.

12 See Annie L. Cot, 'Neoconservative economics, utopia and crisis', *Zone*, nos 1/2 (1987), pp. 293–311.

13 See, for example, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); and Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

14 Meaghan Morris, 'Banality in cultural studies', *Discourse*, vol. X, no. 2 (1988), p. 21. Morris holds together an analysis of the particular circumstances of the production of a film and its formal orchestration of meanings in Meaghan Morris, 'Tooth and claw: tales of survival and *Crocodile Dundee*', in Andrew Ross (ed.), *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1988), pp. 105–27.

15 Paul Smith, *Millennial Dreams: Contemporary Culture and Capital in the North* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 60.

16 Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Boys town', in *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 220, 224. See Linda McDowell, 'Gender divisions in a

and economic analyses inscribe their readers as subjects in particular ways.[17]

The general strategy adopted in this essay is to approach 'economics' as a multivalent term that includes implicated practices of production and consumption: talk about *Jurassic Park* as a commercial phenomenon in film industry periodicals and the mass press; strategies of representation in the film, including its address to spectators as literal consumers, its orchestration of post-Fordist space and time, and its rehearsal of workers' subjectivity in the post-Fordist era; and economics as discourse in Foucault's sense of the constitutive terms for what can be said in any historical period. Rather than detail the way *Jurassic Park* commercializes everyday life, I shall begin by looking at how the commercialization of culture figures in public debate and how *Jurassic Park* was produced as an economic object.

Theming

When is a movie not a movie? When it's themed entertainment.[18]

Themed entertainment, or the use of thematic material from a film for a theme park ride, is a key example of the blurring of the boundaries of film across multiple sites and forms of commodification symptomatic of contemporary industry practices. The theme park mentality as a general cultural practice in which commerce and culture are imbricated in simulated experiences is also at the centre of critiques of the commercialization of contemporary life. *Jurassic Park* illustrates the logic of theming in its reappearance at Universal Studios, Hollywood as 'Jurassic Park: The Ride', which is a water ride on a 'runaway' raft through a dinosaur-filled jungle ending with the raft going down a steep slide. As the Universal Studios Hollywood advertising brochure notes, 'It's just you, a man-eating T rex, an eight-storey drop . . . and a boat'. 'The Ride' and others at Universal, Disneyland, Universal Studios in Florida and Six Flags America represent a general shift in the theme park industry from 'real-estate intensive rides' to 'electronic or special-effects intensive entertainment',[19] which draws on films as virtual environments. The permeable boundaries of theming also work in the opposite direction in the 'movie-ride' film in which 'imperatives of pure sensation' leave 'audiences stagger[ing] back into daylight like passengers unsteadily exiting Coney Island's famous Cyclone'.[20] Continuing a contemporary tradition initiated by *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*'s movie ride scenes include a fall into the gaping mouth of a Velociraptor by Lex (Ariana Richards), granddaughter of John Hammond (Richard Attenborough), who is the park's owner/entrepreneur, and the initial T rex attack on a barely escaping

post-Fordist era: new contradictions or the same old story', in Linda McDowell and Rosemary Pringle (eds), *Defining Women: Social Institutions and Gender Divisions* (Oxford: Polity Press in association with The Open University, 1992), n.p. Thanks to Jean Barr for pointing me in the direction of McDowell's work. For an extended analysis, see Linda McDowell, 'Life without father and Ford: the new gender order of post-Fordism', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol.16, no. 4, new series (1991), pp. 400–419.

17 For a general critique of positivist tendencies in the field of economics, see Deirdre N. McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics*, second edition (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). On the ways exclusions turn on a gendered logic in urban studies and in geography, see Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Chinatown, part four? what Jake forgets about downtown', in *Evictions*, pp. 245–56; and Doreen Massey, 'Flexible sexism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, no. 9 (1991), pp. 31–57.

18 Ray Bennett, 'Theme parks fix on F/X from pix', *Variety*, 14 June 1993, p. 10.

19 Ibid.

20 Bruce Handy, 'Hold on to your popcorn', *Vogue* (June 1993), p. 76.

jeep containing visiting palaeobotanist Ellie Sattler (Laura Dern), visiting mathematician Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum), and park gamekeeper Robert Muldoon (Bob Peck). The visceral sense of an amusement park ride becomes part of the attraction for spectators.[21]

Theming also characterizes the dispersion of film across its merchandized commodities. For John Ellis, the narrative image of a film involves the expectations generated about it in secondary forms of circulation in film posters, advertising slogans, newspapers and television. Justin Wyatt points to the importance of 'high concept' films in the mainstream industry since the 1970s. These films are intimately linked to their marketing through such features as a 'striking, easily reducible narrative' and a single, strongly representative image.[22] In the case of *Jurassic Park*, the T rex is a narrative image that is also a merchandizing logo, and in Wyatt's terms, an easily legible marketing image that suggests a simple, marketable theme. To be sure, the visibility of films through product tie-ins and merchandizing, and the use of films as advertising vehicles for other products have a long history. According to Janet Staiger, by 1915 the US film industry had made key choices facilitating film advertising, such as the product differentiation of feature films emphasizing stars, genre and plot, development of a film's appeal through various media channels such as newspaper advertisements and posters, and the use of indirect methods of advertising such as tie-ins between movie serials and the serialization of their stories in popular magazines and between fashions in films and fashion sections in newspapers.[23] Charles Eckert argues that Hollywood cinema participated in producing a 'new zeitgeist of consumerism' as early as the 1910s, for example, in Cecil B. De Mille's modern photoplays that enabled the display of stylish clothes and extravagant bathrooms. He discusses formalized corporate arrangements in the 1930s that solidified the link between manufacturing companies and film companies, for example, between MGM and Coke, and between Warner Brothers and General Motors and General Electric.

Contemporary developments, as Wyatt suggests, tie films to commercial considerations in a much more extensive way than earlier strategies. The market saturation associated with *Jurassic Park* is especially symptomatic of the function of films now as 'not so much movies as corporate product lines', as *Variety* notes, and of the critical importance of 'how a company exploits its movie moment'.[24] The connection between film and products is further enhanced by the current practice of synchronized timing of a film's release with its merchandized products. For the original *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), the first contemporary blockbuster with extensive merchandizing connections, products were developed after the film's release. For *Jurassic Park*, worldwide marketing strategies were being planned two years before the film's release. Increasingly

21 On the visceral thrills and attractions of early cinema and its implications for spectatorship in the context of modernity, see Tom Gunning, 'An aesthetic of astonishment: early film and the (in)credulous spectator', *Art and Text*, vol. 34 (1989), pp. 31–45; and Tom Gunning, 'The cinema of attraction: early film, its spectator and the avant garde', *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, nos 3/4 (1986), pp. 63–70.

22 John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*, revised edition (London: Routledge, 1992) and Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1994). Wyatt quotes Spielberg on the importance of being able to reduce a film's idea to twenty-five words or less (p. 13).

23 See Janet Staiger, 'Announcing wares, winning patrons, voicing ideals: thinking about the history and theory of film advertising', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 29, no 3 (1990), pp. 3–31; Charles Eckert, 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's window', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1978), pp. 1–21; and Jeanne Allen, 'The film viewer as consumer', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1980), pp. 481–99. Other contemporary film examples heavily invested in merchandising include *Hercules* (John Musker and Ron Clements, 1997) and the re-release of the *Star Wars* special edition trilogy (George Lucas, 1997). See Stefan Kanfer, 'Air Hercules joins Disney's pantheon of pitchmen', *New York Times*, 22 June 1997, pp. 17, 25; and James Sterngold, 'The return of the merchandizer: as the millennium approaches, *Star Wars* is back on screen and in stores', *New York Times*, 30 January 1997, pp. C 1, 5.

24 Peter Bart, 'Mythic megapix', *Variety*, 21 June 1993, p.3; and Michael Fleming, 'Product pluggola padding pic producers' budgets', *Variety*, 9 May 1990, p. 22.

accelerated and multiple cycles of consumption associated with a film's afterlives also extend the reach of the narrative/merchandizing image. During the release of *The Lost World*, *Advertising Age* noted, 'the studio is said to want to keep the brand going via a TV series, comic book, and another movie'. Seven years after *Jurassic Park*'s release, the memory of the film is kept alive in an article in *The New York Times* on 3-D films, with a computer-enhanced image of an open-mouthed dinosaur whose body extends beyond the screen over spectators' heads as they watch a popular 3-D film, *T-rex: Back to the Cretaceous* (Brett Leonard, 1998).[25]

This logic of circulation is certainly supported by corporate arrangements. Theme park divisions within conglomerates take advantage of the crossover of special-effects technologies used by film production companies for developing rides.[26] *Jurassic Park*, directed by Spielberg through his company Amblin Entertainment, was distributed by Universal, the film unit within MCA, which was then owned by Matsushita Electric Industrial Company, a Japanese company whose global brand name is Panasonic. Corporate activity around the marketing and merchandizing of *Jurassic Park* marked a noteworthy increase in synergies within divisions of MCA, and between MCA and Matsushita.[27] Synergistic activities included the water-ride project as well as inhouse manufacture of tie-in products, for example MCA records of the film's soundtrack, MCA Winterland Productions' T shirts, and Putnam's children's books. Large-scale meetings between microelectronics and film personnel to coordinate worldwide merchandizing plans and to work around clashing marketing objectives involved an unheard-of degree of cooperation, and divisions within MCA shared the promotion costs for the film. In addition, meetings between the hundred licensees of *Jurassic Park* products were held during the prerelease stage. While such concerted effort around a single film can increase risk, theming also makes corporate sense.[28]

At the same time, the cultural consequences of theming are often construed as a symptom of the decline in the quality of public life. For Edward Soja, in his contribution to *Variations on a Theme Park*, the problem with various simulations in the public spaces of the contemporary exopolis, or city without a centre, is that 'the disappearance of the real is no longer revealingly concealed'.[29] Product tie-in television advertisements by McDonald's illustrate this description. The ads construe the film as their referent by relying on spectators' knowledge of the plot to appreciate the joke of a park worker anticipating the delivery of his hamburger in an animal crate, and by using props such as the monumental wooden *Jurassic Park* gate as well as point-of-view shots from inside an animal crate, and sound effects and shaking puddles of water suggesting the thud of dinosaurs on the move reminiscent of the film. These ads represent going to McDonald's for a hamburger as going to visit a theme park,

25 Klady, '"Billion-dollar dinos"', p. 78; Don Groves, 'Long lead time eased marketing efforts', *Variety*, 20 September 1993, p. 62; and for the quote, see Jeff Jensen, '*Jurassic* sequel set to be promo monster', *Advertising Age*, 10 February 1997, p. 46. On 3-D films, see Matthew Gurewitsch, 'The next wave? 3-D could bring on a sea change', *New York Times*, 2 January 2000, pp. 11, 28.

26 Bennett, 'Theme parks', p. 10.

27 Thomas R. King, 'Monster mash: *Jurassic Park* offers a high-stakes text of Hollywood synergy', *Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 1993, pp. A1, A6. The success of *Jurassic Park*, however, was not enough to make Matsushita keep MCA, which was purchased by Seagram in 1995.

28 King, 'Monster mash', p. A6; and Magiera, 'Dino-might', S-8. See Wyatt in *High Concept* for a more general discussion of the importance of synergies across different media as an important strategy for conglomerates.

29 Soja, 'Inside Exopolis', p. 121.

which involves 'experiencing' *Jurassic Park* the film in the televisual spaces of everyday life. Soja's stress on the blatant visibility of the fabricated across the social field aptly describes the *Jurassic Park* phenomenon.

Beyond Soja's useful detailing of the myriad ways in which culture turns on a simulated logic, however, it is unclear where to take the critique of the theme park mentality. While Soja gestures towards the necessity of 'new postmodern modes of criticism and confrontation' that look to spatial practices for the hidden consequences of new modes of social regulation, he does so in the context of a nostalgia for 'stubbornly Modernist modes of resistance and demystification' (supposedly) reflecting a period of more certainty about political interventions. In a similar manner Michael Sorkin, in the same collection, presumes a clarity in social relations characterizing traditional cities, such as agoras, piazzas and downtowns, which exhibit a spatial centredness that facilitated public debate. He contrasts these places with the ageographic contemporary city in which space is departicularized and where the theme park stands as a 'substitute for the democratic public realm'.[30] In the case of *Jurassic Park*, a nostalgic glance to a time before commercialization and simulation is unhelpful because it obscures the terms through which the film enters into public debate about these issues.

The assessment of theming by Louise Huxtable, former architecture critic for *The New York Times*, foregrounds two additional problems. Huxtable looks at the phenomenon of themed environments in which real places are reproduced in simulated contexts, for example, 'New York, New York', a hotel and casino complex pastiching famous New York buildings. Such places erode authentic experience by turning an original place into an 'experience', a generalized milieu in which original markers authenticate the reproduction. The first problem with Huxtable's analysis is a view of the consumer as someone whose powers of discrimination are impaired because she/he prefers the simulated over the real. Examples such as the popularity of gift shops over museums, and of the reproduction of the Alamo building over the less prepossessing nearby original, indicate that 'surrogate experience and synthetic settings' are now 'the preferred American way of life'. In a similar vein, Sorkin assumes a monolithic consumer susceptible to 'a new world order bent on a single citizenship of consumption' akin to the 'illusory choices of the TV system', and Soja presumes little choice on the part of a consumer who more easily succumbs to fabrication because of unmarked boundaries between real and simulated spaces.[31]

These critiques by urban studies and architecture theorists and critics are symptomatic of a general derision whenever the theme park is used as an example of social trends. While I am not attempting to set the stage for an argument that theme parks are

30 Ibid. p. 122; and Michael Sorkin, 'Introduction: variations on a theme park', in *Variations on a Theme Park*, p. xv. As both Deutsche and Nancy Fraser suggest, however, nostalgic constructions of past public spheres are problematic because they mask the exclusions of social groups, including women, in those spheres. See Deutsche, 'Agoraphobia', in *Evictions*, pp. 269–327; and Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy', in Bruce Robbins (ed.) for the Social Text Collective, *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 1–32.

31 Ada Louise Huxtable, 'Living with the fake, and liking it', *New York Times*, 30 March 1997, S2, p. 1; Sorkin, 'Introduction', p. xiii; and Soja, 'Inside Exopolis', p. 122. Huxtable's article is an excerpted chapter from her book, *The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion* (New York: The New Press, 1997).

utopian or that *Jurassic Park* is progressive, a less judgmental view of consumer activity and a less deterministic sense of consumption enable a more nuanced assessment. For a start, the potential for multiple viewings and the plethora of subsidiary texts on *Jurassic Park*'s production and special effects position spectators as knowledgeable in various ways: for example, as dinosaur officiandos, science-fiction buffs and computer enthusiasts. The densely intertextual reception context of *Jurassic Park*, which includes myriad articles and programmes on the production of the film, also makes it less likely that spectators would be innocent of the terms that constitute the fabricated nature of the experience or that 'surrogate experience' is a necessary consequence of 'synthetic settings'.

Most importantly, themed entertainment raises the question of the specific textual strategies through which consumers are invited to experience cultural forms of theming. For *Variety*, theming 'combin[es] large-format films with simulators, [through which] you're trying to get the audience to be part of the show'.[32] Peter Lunenfeld makes a similar point in his assessment of the distinct operating paradigms in the new computer technologies. Virtual reality, in particular, involves 'computer-generated worlds in which the user can interact with "objects" and other users' involving the logic of 'immersion in (synthetic) experience'.[33] A key decision regarding *Jurassic Park*'s special effects was to replace go-motion animation with highly sophisticated computer graphic images (CGI), with the aim of creating animals rather than movie monsters in scenes including the introduction of the Brachiosaurus dinosaurs, the T rex attacks, and Lex's fall through the ceiling of the Visitors' Centre. While these scenes convincingly combine twentieth-century people and moving prehistoric dinosaurs, their aesthetic logic works by placing spectators in a real but '*synthetic* experience' characterizing not the real but the virtually real. This strategy is particularly apparent in the scene in which a herd of Gallimimus dinosaurs run past Grant (Sam Neill), Lex and Tim (Joseph Mazzello), Hammond's grandson. Grant, in particular, repeatedly looks over his shoulder at the dinosaurs surrounding him. After Lex, Tim and Grant leave from the left foreground of the shot, the camera remains in the middle foreground in the midst of the scene with Gallimimus dinosaurs running out of frame to the left and right of the camera position and, by implication, the spectator's position via the camera. This strategy produces a de facto logic of immersion for the spectator in a virtual – and realistically impossible – scene, as well as a kinaesthetic effect of dinosaurs hurtling toward her/his position associated with movie rides. Theming in the context of an immersion-effect involves a spectacle that is clearly an illusion.

As opposed to a consumer who is fooled by the fake (Huxtable), or even a spectator who disavows the absent present of the

32 Bennett, 'Theme parks', p. 10.

33 Peter Lunenfeld, 'Digital dialectics: a hybrid theory of computer media', *Afterimage* (November 1983), p. 5.

photographic real (Metz),[34] the immersion-effect is more in keeping with a *Jurassic*-literate consumer who, while taking pleasure in simulation, knows that the fake is fake. This is not to overvalorize choice, autonomy or interactivity in computer technologies, but it is to suggest a more complicated relationship than one of false consciousness. It is also to presume that the pleasures of immersion do not involve the straightforward substitution of real experience associated with a naive consumer.

The second problem in Huxtable's discussion of the blurring of the boundaries between original and reproduction in themed environments is an opposition between art and commerce. When the aura of the original becomes ownership of the fake, the effect is to diminish connoisseurship of the real.[35] Huxtable employs hierarchical high culture categories of distinction when she enjoins art critics and academics to return to their proper function as 'defenders and keepers of authenticity'.[36] This presumption of a noncommercialized authority for art is also played out in the general consensus about product placement in films. Peter J. Boyer in *American Film* comments on a 'new marketing-oriented Hollywood' that treats films like other products, that is, like 'so many bars of soap'. Wasko identifies the problem of an overly commercial influence on the creative decision-making aspects of film in the increasing pressure of product affiliations, for example, when scriptwriters develop scenes with an eye to their 'toyetic applications' for merchandizers.[37]

The rejoinder to these critiques is not to make a case for commercialization. However, treating the incursion of commerce on everyday life, art, and films as the conclusion of the argument ends the argument too soon. It also effects a tautology in which commercial culture is critiqued for being commercial. Measuring experience along a continuum from authenticity to inauthenticity and judging art according to models of creative autonomy or of commercial exploitation are inadequate frameworks for analyzing an everyday life that is so extensively mediated and commercialized. More generally, critiques of the theme park mentality both make too much of its simulated experience as a substitution for real experience and make too little of its status as symptomatic of contemporary life. Rather than ask how *Jurassic Park* illustrates the theme park mentality, a more apt question would be, how is *Jurassic Park* produced as an economic object?

The mise-en-scene of commerce

> *Hollywood's true auteurs are its marketers. . . . The sort of genius that once was displayed in a deft tracking shot or a well-executed plot twist can now be detected in the subtlety of a product tie-in.*[38]

34 The loss of indexicality in digital images that do not have a referent in reality is an interesting problem for film theory. See Lev Manovich, 'The paradoxes of digital photography', in Hubertus v. Amelunxen, Stefan Iglhaut and Florian Rotzer, in collaboration with Alexis Cassel and Nikolaus G. Schneider (eds), *Photography after Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1996), pp. 57–65; and Stephen Prince, 'True lies: perceptual realism, digital images, and film theory', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1996), pp. 27–37.

35 For an analysis that addresses similar issues to those discussed by Huxtable, but one that is more nuanced on the implications of mass reproduction, see Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 217–51.

36 Huxtable, 'Living with the fake', p. 40. For a discussion of the centrality of a blockbuster logic for museums in the example of the King Tutankhamen exhibition, see Judith H. Dobrzynski, 'Glory days for the art museum', *New York Times*, 5 October 1997, S2, p. 1.

37 Peter J. Boyer, 'Risky business', *American Film* (January-February 1984), p. 14; and Wasko, *Hollywood*, p. 214.

38 Paul Tough (moderator), Mark Gill, Jeffrey Godsick, Bob Israel, Joe Nimziki (discussants), 'The new auteurs', *Harper's*, no. 286 (June 1993), p. 33.

Jurassic Park was released for general distribution in the USA on 11 June 1993 and in the first week brought in box-office returns of $79.2 million from 2,404 theaters on 3,500 screens. In March 1994, licensed merchandise sales were estimated at $1 billion and worldwide box-office sales at $882.1 million. When *The Lost World* came out in theatres, *Jurassic Park* had earned $916 million in international box office and $1 billion in merchandising sales, making it, at that time, the highest-grossing picture worldwide. *Jurassic Park* cost $56–$60 million to make, with prints and initial advertising costs in the USA of $20 million.[39]

The key to *Jurassic Park*'s financial success was its extensive marketing strategy. As Leonard Klady notes in *Advertising Age*, 'the difference between mere success and joining the billion-dollar club boils down to merchandising'.[40] Three 'must-have' product merchandising categories are toys, fast food and videogames, which were developed for *Jurassic Park* by the worldwide toy licensee Kenner, McDonald's, and marketer for Nintendo software, Sega of America, and Ocean of America.[41] An eventual 5,000 licensed products included video games, Dinocardz scientific trading cards, *The Making of Jurassic Park* (which was on *The New York Times* bestseller list), *Jurassic Park Golden Look-Look Story Book*, lunchboxes, back-to-school supplies, Hallowe'en costumes, children's dish sets, Triceratops tattoos, Velociraptor holograms, computer screensavers, children's underwear, gummie dinosaurs, 3-D stand-up puzzles, backpacks, bedspreads, 3-D viewmaster reels, lip balms, Milton Bradley board games, T rex plastic model kits, mugs and spitting Velociraptor watches.[42] The T rex logo unified these licensed products and promotional programmes across diverse languages and cultures.

Jurassic Park illustrates aspects of retailing in a post-Fordist period. For Murray, writing about the UK, retailers' economies of scope are achieved through market niching directed at market segments differentiated by age, household types, income, occupation, housing and locality, and involve product uses correlated across different activities. Shops target market segments by offering ranges of integrated products organized around lifestyle effecting a 'new pluralism of products'.[43] *Jurassic Park*'s products project an imaginary 'lifestyle' appropriate to the logic of fantasy upon which children's toys rely, and guaranteed by the T rex and the 'brand loyal' quality of children's consumption patterns. As the president of Kenner Products notes, children are 'fanatic about buying the authentic product'.[44] Work by Stephen Kline on the global marketing of toys to children in the era of flexible specialization illustrates the market-niching nature of this address to children. Kline argues that differentiations within childhood are an increasingly significant factor for toy marketing, with the important differences being between mixed-sex preschoolers three to five, boys six to ten and girls six to

39 Opening box-office figures are from *Variety*, 28 June 1993, p. 8. Figures for 1994 are from Magiera, 'Dino-might', p. S-8. For 1997 figures, see Jensen, '"Jurassic" sequel', and Bernard Weinraub, 'Spielberg's brute lizards crush the records', *New York Times*, 27 May 1997, pp. B1, 6. *Jurassic Park* costs variously reported in King, 'Monster mash', p. 1; Magiera, 'Promotional marketer', p. S-1; Bernard Weinraub, 'Gambit by Universal: push *Jurassic Park* and skimp the rest', *New York Times*, 20 April 1993, p. C13; and Kathleen O'Steen, '*Park* Gooses Nerve', *Variety*, September 20, 1993, p. 8. In February 1998, *Jurassic Park*'s box-office numbers were superseded by *Titanic*.

40 Klady, '"Billion-dollar dinos"', p. 78.

41 Magiera, 'Dino-might', S-1.

42 Kate Fitzgerald, 'Who said they were extinct?: dinosaurs show staying power in world of marketing tie-ins', *Advertising Age*, vol. 20 (September 1993), p. 12; and 'Jurassic schlock', p. 37.

43 Murray, 'Life after Henry Ford', p. 11. The Disney Shops are, of course, the most notable instance of this logic. Wyatt notes that market research in the film industry develops in the 1970s.

44 Thomas R. King, 'This cast of heavies could make Godzilla look like a stiff', *Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 1993, p. A6.

ten. *Mediaweek* confirms this view, commenting that 'labeling kids as a homogeneous, monolithic mass can be a serious mistake'.[45] The theming surrounding *Jurassic Park* contributes to this logic of market niching by targeting children's many activities (play, eating, sleeping, school, computers) in age-appropriate ways.

Over and above this retailing logic, and in excess of the requirements of market niching per se, *Jurassic Park* was construed as an economic object in another important way. The film's financial success was treated as a spectacle in its own right. Celebratory reporting contributed to this construction. For *Variety*, the film had 'the best opening in film history'; moreover, 'no single film has ever generated so much money, so fast. It has become an industry unto itself.' For *Advertising Age*, the film 'has evolved beyond being the highest-grossing movie of all time to become a global brand'. Even critical reviews participated in the hyperbole. For *The New York Times*, even 'scarier' than the dinosaurs were the developments 'that establish [the film] as the overnight flagship of a brand-new entertainment empire'.[46] An epidemic of punning in article titles continued in an ebullient, if ironic, vein: 'Monster mash' (on MCA's marketing and merchandizing synergies in *The Wall Street Journal*); 'Who said they were extinct' (on marketing tie-ins in *The New York Times*); 'Dino-might' (on the licensed merchandizing products in *Advertising Age*); 'More dinosaurs! Stalk on' (on museum synergies in *The New York Times*); and '$200,000,000+, first 23 days, a historical beginning' (*Variety* advertisement).[47] The merchandised products also became part of the spectacle. An array of items was discussed on the *Today* show by Katie Couric and on *John and Leeza*, which ran a segment with an adolescent toy reviewer who demonstrated the advantages of a Dino Damage toy and a Jurassic Park pinball machine.

Continuing in this vein of excess, *Jurassic Park*'s merchandising strategy is also a textual strategy in the film. The T rex logo appears on many objects in the film, from articles of clothing to theme park signs, and the merchandised products themselves appear as product placements. In the scene in the Visitors' Centre when Sattler confronts Hammond over the values that have led to creating the park, the two opening shots pan and track across a display of *Jurassic Park* lunchboxes, stuffed dinosaurs, children's pyjamas, plastic cups and a stamp set bearing the mark of the T rex. This lack of subtlety departs from *Harper*'s view of the mark of the new auteur and from more common product placement practices in which films display nonaffiliated merchandise, for example, Huggies diapers in *Baby Boom* (Charles Shyer, 1987), Ray Ban sunglasses in *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986) and Reese's Pieces in *E.T.* (Steven Spielberg, 1982).[48] *Jurassic Park* foregrounds the presence of its own products, and in this moment of commercial self-reflexivity, makes its *own* merchandising economics explicit.

45 Stephen Kline, 'The play of the market: on the internationalization of children's culture', *Theory, Culture, Society*, vol. 12 (1995), pp. 103–29; and 'Daylight spending time', *Mediaweek*, vol 1, no. 14 (1991), p. 30.

46 Lawrence Cohn, 'National BO', *Variety*, 12 July 1993, p. 9; Klady, '"Billion-dollar dinos"', p. 11; Magiera, 'Dino-might', p. S-1; and Janet Maslin, 'Screen stars with teeth to spare', *New York Times*, 11 June 1993, p. C1.

47 King, 'Monster mash'; Fitzgerald, 'Who said they were extinct'; Magiera, 'Dino-might'; William Grimes, 'More dinosaurs! Stalk on', *New York Times*, 25 June 1993, p. C28; and *Variety*, 19 July 1993.

48 See Paul Mathur, 'Pure product', *Blitz* (1988), pp. 31–3.

The global reach of the merchandise, the celebration of the film's box-office numbers, and the film's display of its own accumulative strategies contribute to producing *Jurassic Park* as an economic object through the spectacle of its own success. But how should the explicitness of this spectacle be assessed? In talk about the film in the mass press, the product placement scene was a dilemma. Undecided commentators speculated on the status of the shots as ironic, or a miscalculation, or trying to have it both ways. In a *Newsweek* article, a studio executive comments, 'It's a joke. We're also making the point that you don't just put these things out and try to grab as much money as you can from people.' The article's reporters, however, are less sanguine about this 'gonzo reflexiveness', which looks both like 'an ironic comment on Hollywood's commercialism' and 'a home-shopping network'. Spielberg defends the shots by objecting to the 'connotation of shame around the word "merchandizing"', remembering his desire for a coonskin cap sold in a cinema lobby during the screening of a Davy Crockett movie in 1955.[49] The most critical comments about the film's merchandising strategy concerned the film's violence in relation to its merchandising address to children. *Jurassic Park* was rated at PG 13 but product marketing targeted younger children for whom the film would be too violent. For Bernard Weinraub, this is a 'hypocritical and greedy' strategy.[50]

These critiques treat the visibility of *Jurassic Park*'s economics as a problem of balance (merchandising is excessive) or as a problem of intentionality (either a disingenuous opportunism on the part of MCA or a sincerity on the part of Spielberg). My suggestion, however, is that one can make more of the explicitness of the spectacle of the film's economic logics, especially in relation to post-Fordism. *Jurassic Park* makes its economics visible. But what is at stake in the fact of this visibility?

49 Both quotations are from Giles with Foote, 'Coming to a toy store near you', p. 65.

50 Bernard Weinraub, 'Selling *Jurassic*: the film and toys', *New York Times*, 14 June 1993, p. C11. Also see Maslin, 'Screen stars with teeth', p. C1 and Weinraub, 'Gambit by Universal', p. C13.

Space, time and memory

> *Together, neo-Fordist strategies and neoconservative ethics . . . instigate a regime in which individuals are less subjected to than incorporated by capital.*[51]

Economics is not simply a synonym for commerce. It involves shifts in social relations of production and reproduction and in regimes of space and time. For Alliez and Feher, in neo-Fordism[52] the logic of capital is represented in the image of 'lustre' as distinct from the stolid imagery of 'massification' characterizing Fordism with its mass production and mass consumption. The 'lustre of capital' invokes intangible, ephemeral and spectacular qualities associated with neo-Fordist developments such as the processing of data as distinct from

51 Alliez and Feher, 'The luster of capital', p. 346.

52 When I discuss Alliez's and Feher's arguments, I will use the term neo-Fordism, which appears in the translation of their article.

concrete raw materials, the electronic flow of information and the speed of data transfer producing 'the more flexible motion of capital', and the 'glitter of telematics' through the presence of computer terminals in the home.[53] For Alliez and Feher, a Fordist logic is invested in the control and compartmentalization of space, especially a segregation of the spaces of production and of reproduction, for example, the walled and gated factory, and strict demarcations of work and leisure (for men, although Alliez and Feher do not make this qualification). In the neo-Fordist era the distinction between these spaces is elided, for example, in the temporal decentralization of work involving the overflow of the workday beyond delimited time periods, and in the diffusion of the space of the workplace beyond the factory and office. In the neo-Fordist period greater significance is given to the control over time. Capital no longer simply provides work within allocated periods of time but claims to be a 'provider of time', in the sense that it 'subsume[s] time – the totality of time – under its own law'.[54]

53 Alliez and Feher, 'The luster of capital', pp. 336–7, 346.

54 Ibid., p. 316.

Jurassic Park rehearses these logics of the lustre of capital. The film uses expensive and innovative digital technologies to produce intangible, ephemeral and spectacular images of dinosaurs which have no referent in reality. In the Gallimimus scene discussed earlier, for example, and in a shot following those in which Lex, Tim and Grant are running alongside the dinosaurs, the spectator is positioned with the characters behind a fallen tree as they watch the T rex eating a Gallimimus dinosaur. The spectacle of technological special effects is emphasized by the recessive framing of the shot in which the spectator watches the scene from a place behind the characters, who are in turn watching the scene from behind a fallen tree branch. The film, that is, produces its own image of the lustre of capital. Plot events, moreover, literalize other strategies associated with neo-Fordism such as the control over time. The scientific project of cloning dinosaurs through extracting dino DNA from the blood of mosquitoes fossilized in tree sap is an appropriation of historical time for profit on a grand scale. The dinosaurs embody this commodification of time and, as park attractions, blur the boundaries between production and reproduction by turning reproduction into a commodity.[55]

While *Jurassic Park* represents strategies associated with post-Fordism, it also does so in a refracted way in its address to spectators through strategies of immersion associated with its computerized special effects and movie rides. This point echoes Deutsche's argument that 'representations are not discrete objects at all but social relations, themselves productive of meaning and subjectivity'.[56] Through framing strategies and point-of-view shots used in some of the film's movie-ride scenes, spectators are invited to experience ephemeral effects as if they were inside the diegetic events.

55 To its credit the film, unlike Alliez and Feher, makes the politics of that blurring explicit: fertility turned to profitability is in the hands of men. Hammond is present at each birth, and Dr Woo informs the visitors, 'there is no unauthorized breeding [of female-only dinosaurs] in Jurassic Park'.

56 Deutsche, 'Boys town', p. 224. This point draws on semiotic and psychoanalytic film theories, for example, see Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

This immersion has significance both as a cultural logic involving a relationship between representation and subjectivity and as an instance of the imbrication of culture and the economy. Both issues can be developed along the lines of an earlier analysis of mass culture by Siegfried Kracauer. In 'The mass ornament', Kracauer analyzes the phenomenon of the Tiller Girls, a synchronized dancing troupe in Berlin during the 1920s and the period of Fordism. This essay is interesting, especially in light of the contemporary critics of the theme park mentality, because, unlike them, Kracauer does not castigate the mass audience. Rather, he views the popularity of the Tiller Girls as 'legitimate'. This spectacle of regimented and mechanical bodies makes visible in the aesthetic realm the circumstances of work life experienced by the spectating masses. The mechanical and geometric pattern produced by the dancers is likened to the abstract rationality of the capitalist economic system in which, for example, the worth of workers in measured by the wage. The Tiller Girls thereby bears the traces of the sphere of production in its status as 'an aesthetic reflex of the rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system'.[57] In the mass ornament, spectators recognize these conditions of their reality. Kracauer's analysis is a nuanced assessment of the terms of the investments of a mass audience whose members link their experience as workers to their experience as consumers.

The specific work condition that the movement of the Tiller Girls rearticulates is the rationalized orchestration of bodies associated with Taylorism in Fordist factories and offices. My suggestion here is that *Jurassic Park* can be analyzed along these lines in relation to the experience of workers and the changed social relations of labour in a post-Fordist economy. For Alliez and Feher, neo-Fordism involves a mode of incorporation in which workers and owners are more intimately bound up with capitalists' interests. In the Fordist economy, workers were asked to be 'reasonable', a strategy effected through trade union wage bargaining, productivity deals and the arbitration of the Keynesian nation-state. In the neo-Fordist period, workers are 'led to feel "responsible" since the profitability of the business . . . is considered to be in the interests of both owners and wage earners alike'. Various factors contribute to this change, including the decline of trade unionism and industrial shifts such as data processing, in which workers and machines are more like relays in the circulation of information, the extension of the workday beyond formerly delimited periods, the extension of worktime produced by the home computer and communication technologies, and the blurring of the spaces of reproduction and production in the extension of the service sector and in the commodification of knowledge of various kinds of behaviours. That is, shifts in a neo-Fordist spatial and temporal regime contribute to an incorporative mode of subjectivity for workers. In neo-Fordism, both workers and

57 Siegfried Kracauer, 'The mass ornament', *New German Critique*, no. 5 (Spring 1975), p. 70. Thanks to Patrice Petro for stressing Kracauer's particular view of the mass audience in a conversation. See Patrice Petro, 'Modernity and mass culture in Weimar: contours of a discourse on sexuality in early theories of perception and representation', *New German Critique*, no. 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 115–46, and *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). Also see David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986); and Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

capitalists are asked to 'identify with [capital's] accumulation' and as a result, workers 'partake in the luster of capital'.[58]

As a mark of this logic, *Jurassic Park* invites spectators to experience its spectacle of costly technological effects in the incorporative terms characterizing workers' subjectivity in post-Fordism. More precisely, there is a homology between the logic of immersion in *Jurassic Park* and Alliez's and Feher's characterization of workers' incorporation into the image of the lustre of capital, and through this homology, developments in the economy are rearticulated at the level of culture. At the same time, the film constructs a memory of labour associated with Fordism. The work of the park is presented to Grant, Sattler, Malcolm and Gennaro as 'a kind of a ride' in a scene that begins in a projection room where the group are shown an interactive film on the scientific experiments of the park. The setting becomes a theme park ride when the seats begin to move and the screen lifts to reveal the inner space of the park in which real laboratory technicians and scientists, who are located behind a glass partition, work on different aspects of the cloning process, which later includes the birth of a Velociraptor. While Dean MacCannell analyzes the way workspaces became an attraction in early twentieth-century tourism in Paris, in the ride in *Jurassic Park* the work of reproduction becomes a tourist spectacle, another blurring of production and reproduction.[59] This ride is also a mnemonic of the Fordist assembly line in an inverted form. On the assembly line, stationary workers perform repetitive tasks and gauge their movements according to the requirements of the moving line. In *Jurassic Park*, the consumer/spectators of the park are moved past the attraction of work as if they themselves are on the assembly line moving past the workers. In this film that treats history as the commodified product of applied knowledge, the assembly line figures as a memory of work in which the social relations of production are most visible in relations of consumption.

Jurassic Park addresses its spectators as economic subjects in various ways – as literal (not only semiotic) consumers, as worker/consumers invested in the lustre of capital through strategies of immersion, and as theme park riders for whom the labour of the assembly line is visible through its trace in the realm of consumption. My argument is that this address, particularly in the case of immersive strategies and the film's mnemonic of Fordism, can be analyzed for the way it invokes the conditions of work life for spectators rather than simply an escape from those conditions. This is not to say that the film offers a politicized analysis of work in post-Fordism but, rather, that one of its appeals is the possibility of a sense of recognition such as Kracauer suggests in his analysis of the mass ornament.

58 Alliez and Feher, 'The luster of capital', pp. 349, 349, 317, 350.

59 See Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

Opinions and the post-Fordist theme park

How do [images] invite viewers to take up a position that then defines them as public beings?[60]

60 Deutsche, 'Agoraphobia', p. 286.

Curiously, while *Jurassic Park* celebrates its commercial success, it also critiques the theme park mentality as well as the entrepreneurial culture underpinning neoconservative ethics and the post-Fordist era. While the film begins by legitimating the commercialization of science for the theme park, the authority of this connection is undermined as the film progresses. The critique of commerce is particularly effected through the narrative structure of an investigation.

This structure has three movements in which three distinct opinions about the theme park are expressed. Initially the safety of the park is under scrutiny, with Gennaro as the major figure along with Grant, Sattler and Malcolm. The problem of the park's security measures is quickly superseded by a dilemma over the park's ethics. Gennaro does an abrupt turnabout once he realizes the commercial potential of the park's attractions ('we can charge anything we want . . . and then there's the merchandising'), and Malcolm takes up the gauntlet when he criticizes Hammond's irresponsible use of scientific research for commercial gain: 'Before you even knew what you had, you patented it and packaged it and slapped it on a plastic lunchbox and now you're selling it.' Malcolm's remarks initiate a change of heart in Sattler and Grant, who also criticize the project.

The third movement occurs during an escape through the unprotected park by Grant, Lex and Tim when the investigation takes a psychological turn as an emotional journey for Grant through his ambivalence about fatherhood. Grant lacks parenting skills and is disinterested in starting a family of 'young Dr Grants' with Sattler; during the escape, however, he becomes the children's protector. This transformation is foregrounded in an exchange between Lex and Grant. Lex asks, 'What are you and Ellie going to do if you don't have to pick up dinosaurs' bones, anymore?' to which Grant replies, 'I guess we'll have to evolve, too'. Grant's development to a higher (natural) stage of (surrogate) fatherhood is visually reinforced in a shot of Grant, Lex and Tim framed as a group, huddled in a tree like nesting birds, a shot whose authority is heightened by its connection to the scientific argument in the film that dinosaurs are related to birds not reptiles and that some dinosaurs nested like birds in trees. A narrative rhyming of (natural) dinosaur reproduction with human reproduction makes a de facto case for the new familialism. Grant, Lex and Tim discover hatched dinosaur eggs and baby dinosaur footprints on the ground in the theme park, suggesting that heterosexual reproduction has reasserted itself (despite efforts towards population control by breeding female dinosaurs only). Malcolm's

chaos theory critique of the park ('life finds a way') is now invoked to explain this 'breeding in the wild', subsuming ethical critique within an evolutionary calling for 'natural' heterosexual reproduction.

In *Jurassic Park*, the ethical problem of the commercialization of science in the park is resolved by the ethos of the new familialism. The film negotiates its critique of Hammond's entrepreneurialism ('spared no expense') and overweening techno-hubris ('next time it will be flawless') by displacing ethics onto affect ('you can't think through this one, John; you have to feel it') and systemic critique onto personalist solutions ('the only thing that matters now are the people we love'). This point is secured by a rhyming shot at the close of the film in which Grant, Lex and Tim are huddled together (as they were in the tree) in the helicopter as it leaves the devastated island and Sattler looks on approvingly. The resolution, to be sure, involves a reconstituted family – children of divorced parents, surrogate parents, a nurturing man and a feminist woman. And certainly, the film represents its key female characters, Sattler and Lex, as strong in gender-reversed ways. The narrative resolution of the film, however, is also problematic because it negotiates feminism in a postfeminist way by adopting tenets of the women's movement such as women's independence, but not the sustained political critique of the family. And inevitably in the 1990s, the film's new family enters into the larger arena of public discourse about 'family values' and 'promise keepers' that poses the family as a solution to political problems.[61] In this, there are some similarities with McDowell's analysis of the UK, where cutbacks in welfare state provisions during the 1980s resulted in a pressure on women to provide unpaid labour in the home accompanied by the rhetoric of an idealized family and Victorian values. *Jurassic Park* draws on such connections between contemporary economics and social rhetorics about the family.

The film further resolves its critique of commercialization by evacuating the politics of space associated with the commercial appropriation of the third-world island of Isla Nublar. This follows a trajectory in which Isla Nublar initially figures as a tourist paradise (emphasized by the IMAX-like helicopter journey to the island at the beginning of the film); and then as a productive space (the island as a breeding laboratory); and finally as a derelict space (uncontrollable dinosaurs destroy the theme park). As the new family leaves the island in a helicopter, it does so against the background of devastation in which the island left behind is like a spoiled site after chemical warfare or, more aptly, a formerly productive area made derelict because capital has moved to other places.[62] The politics of globalization are subsumed within the natural authority of the familial resolution. By construing the family as a solution to the narrative dilemma of unchecked entrepreneurialism, *Jurassic Park* orchestrates a particular 'management of opinion' to use a suggestive

61 For a film review on the contemporary feminist politics of *Jurassic Park*, see Mary Evans, 'Fairy tales of our time', *Women: a Cultural Review*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1994), pp. 96–9. For a discussion of postfeminism, see Deborah Rosenfelt and Judith Stacey, 'Second thoughts on the second wave (a review essay)', *Feminist Studies*, vol 13, no. 2 (1987), pp. 341–61.

62 One of the effects of capital's stress on the appropriation of time is an exclusion of peripheral workers who are outside circuits of knowledge and the production of derelict spaces, for example, under-utilized downtown areas and cities/regions effected by deindustrialization. See Alliez and Feher, 'The luster of capital', pp. 353–6.

formulation by Morris in her analysis of *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986).[63] In *Jurassic Park*, politics becomes a problem of opinion, and the ethical critique of the commercialization of science is reconfigured as an ethos for living.

This is neither to hold *Jurassic Park* up to the grid of a progressive template nor to hold the film accountable for its politics in the manner of a policy document or developmental economic study. It is a film. But the way it is a film is key. In *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Bruce Robbins describes the 'unfinished business of imagining' democracy in postmodernity, that is, 'democracy in an age of mass media, technical instrumentality, commodification, and social heterogeneity'. Approaching a film, as Morris does with *Dundee*, through economic and political logics that constitute the terms of its present, is an important way of taking up Robbins's suggestion of focusing on '[scenes] of evaluation that already exist' as distinct from 'the universalizing ideal of a single public',[64] which invokes a past supposedly more amenable to democratic debate and less commercialized. Wyatt argues that one of the features of a high-concept film is that it 'taps into a national trend or sentiment'.[65] From this perspective, *Jurassic Park*'s assessment of commercialism draws on the critique of the theme park mentality discussed earlier. While it is not surprising that the film recuperates its criticism in conservative ways, the film is, nevertheless, a mediated instance of more widely circulating economic and political positions. Rather than focus on the film as disingenuous in the sense that its critique of commercialism is at odds with its practice of commercialism, it is more useful to view the film as one scene of evaluation. In this case, the simulated is a real (existing) locus of debate.

63 Morris's work on this film moves beyond a generalized sense of 'consumer "appropriation"' of films associated with 'culturalist theories' to specify in precise terms the way the film handles political issues about Aboriginal land rights, the arms race, and radicalism. Morris, 'Tooth and claw', p. 117.

64 Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, p. xii. This book constitutes a de facto rejoinder to some of the contributions in *Variations on a Theme Park*.

65 Wyatt, p. 14.

Telling tall tales: the visibility of economics

> *History serves to show how that-which-is has not always been . . . what different forms of rationality offer as their necessary being, can perfectly well be shown to have a history; and the network of contingencies from which it emerges can be traced . . . [because these rationalities] reside on a base of human practice and human history; and since things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made.*[66]

66 Michel Foucault and Gerard Raulet, 'Structuralism and post-structuralism: an interview with Michel Foucault', *Telos*, no. 55 (Spring 1983), p. 206.

Dinosaurs in a theme park were not, obviously, what Foucault had in mind in characterizing history as contingent, that is, as 'resid[ing] on a base of human practice'. His remarks, however, can be redirected as an ironic comment on *Jurassic Park* where scientific rationality expresses itself in historical dinosaurs produced through human bioengineering practices. The commercial imperatives of this kind of

history-making also point to the punctuating presence of the economy as the last word, if not the last instance, in common parlance. 'If it's not *Jurassic Park*, it's extinct', which is to say if products do not bear the legally licensed logo of the T rex they are inauthentic, they will not be purchased, and their manufacturers will be sued. And, furthermore, if it's not commercial you can forget it, even if it is history. *Jurassic Park*, by telling a tall tale, participates in an inevitable teleology of commercial gain.

But this is only one way of telling the story. The commercial modus operandi of the film in its literal product display shots in the Visitors' Centre scene and the celebration of the film's financial success in secondary sources make sense in the context of a broader visibility of economics as a legitimating discourse in the post-Fordist period. More generally, this visibility is apparent in the words used to describe everyday life, such as 'interest', 'investment', and 'productivity', and in the increasing domains of experience susceptible to economic explanations.

For a number of writers, the contemporary period is marked by an extension of economic rationales across the social fabric. David Harvey in *The Postmodern Condition* analyzes a culture of entrepreneurialism that goes beyond business activity to include urban governance, research and development, and 'the nether concerns of academic, literary, and artistic life'. For Alliez and Feher, the blurring of the spheres of production and reproduction commodifies areas of personal life as purchasable information on topics from health to romance to finances. Workers as consumers of this information become 'inventors in their own lives (conceived of as capital) concerned with obtaining a profitable behavior through the information (conceived of as capital) sold to them'. Smith characterizes the rhetoric surrounding globalization as a kind of 'fundamentalism', one that presumes a historical authority and that projects a 'millennial dream' of a global free-market economy before it actually exists in reality. This 'magical notion' of globalization, nevertheless, has effects on cultural, political and civic life.[67] Cot in *Zone* points to the role of an economic paradigm as a unifying discourse in theories of the Chicago School of Economics, especially work by Gary S. Becker, with the result that nonmarket areas and behaviours such as marriage, electoral behavior, fertility and the family are assessed in relation to economic criteria.

When Cot characterizes economic discourse in neoconservative economic theory as 'deterritorialized', she foregrounds the way it 'transgress[es] the market boundaries of economics' to become the court of last appeals in formerly non-economic domains. This strategy is explained in the introduction to *The New Economics of Human Behavior*, an anthology of articles influenced by Becker in which the discipline of economics is defined as a method rather than by its traditional subject matter of prices, trade, market and money.

67 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 171 and Alliez and Feher, 'The luster of capital', p. 347. Alliez's and Feher's analysis does not seem to allow for consumption in a more politicized sense, for example, women's self-help medical books. Also see Smith, *Millennial Dreams*, p. 14. Smith strongly argues that there are continuities between the present period and previous strategies of capitalist development and accumulation.

This shift enables a very broad conception of the market as 'all realms of human interaction' and of economic analysis as 'the examination of people's behaviour, of their choosing between alternative uses of resources'.[68] An economic analysis of marriage, for example, invokes the notion of 'the marriage premium', which refers to how marriage raises productivity at work for married men through 'augmentation capital', which is 'the ability to augment a spouse's productivity'.[69] The analysis emphasizes that while these categories are gender neutral, decisions about allocating resources are made on the basis of income, and since men generally have higher wages women will tend to provide the services that enable married men to benefit from the marriage premium. Power differentials in the politics of domestic life in this study are neutralized in the characterization of this arrangement as a rational decision-making process. More broadly, the deterritorializing move of economics as 'the science of human behaviour' naturalizes behaviour as market driven in the reductive terms of allocation of resources.[70] Another way of saying this is that 'economics' increasingly presumes to tell the truth of individuals' behaviours by establishing the framework through which those behaviours make sense, and by widening the net of applicability of its explanations. Gary S. Becker's and Guity Nashat Becker's *The Economics of Life*, which offers brief social commentaries on activities ranging from baseball to affirmative action to immigration, reconfirms Gary S. Becker's comment that in the new economics 'hardly a nook or cranny of behaviour is now escaping . . . attention'.[71]

Economics, in this deterritorializing move, occupies a similar place of discursive authority to that of sexuality during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in the way sexuality as an explanatory framework was extended to other domains such as criminality, the family and education. For Foucault, who details this proliferation in *The History of Sexuality*, discourse is not simply talk about sexuality. Subjects are produced through discourses and practices, which become strategies of self definition.[72]

In the context of the new economics as well as capitalism's spectacularization through the image of lustre, it is not surprising that *Jurassic Park* displays its own products, effecting its own form of commercial deterritorialization of the cultural/artistic text, or that its commercial success becomes a spectacle in its own right. In these broad terms, *Jurassic Park* is a symptomatic text. And it is symptomatic in a more precise sense than the critique of commercialism associated with the theme park suggests, especially in critiques like Huxtable's that imply the solution to the problem of commercialized culture is a kind of voluntary withdrawal from its values. Public debate about commercialism along these lines might also have another unintended effect. Foucault characterizes the constant talking about the repression of sexuality as one of the

68 Cot, 'Neoconservative economics', p. 293 and Kathryn Ierulli, Edward L. Glaeser and Mariano Tommasi, 'Introduction', in Mariano Tommasi and Kathryn Ierulli (eds), *The New Economics of Human Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.

69 Kermit Daniel, 'The marriage premium', in Tommasi and Ierulli (eds), *The New Economics of Human Behaviour*, p. 117

70 Ierulli et al., 'Introduction', p. 12.

71 Gary. S. Becker, Preface in Tommasi and Ierulli (eds), *The New Economics of Human Behaviour*, p. xvi. Also see Gary S. Becker and Guity Nashat Becker, *The Economics of Life: from Baseball to Affirmative Action to Immigration, How Real-World Issues Affect Our Everyday Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

72 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: an Introduction*, trans Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981)

strategies by which the discursive authority of sexuality was extended. In a similar vein one could ask: Why do we say with so much conviction that society is overly commercialized? Decrying the commercial nature of everyday life may be yet another way of constantly speaking economics.

To regard the discourse of economics in Foucauldian terms carries a further implication for this paper. As the quote regarding historical method cited above suggests, Foucault's understanding of discourse involves a particular view of the historical field. Different forms of rationality arise from a 'network of contingencies', which means that historical events do not proceed according to evolutionary or teleological logics, even commercial ones. To acknowledge discourse in relation to this historical field involves a shift towards a more dispersed sense of relations. It follows that no overarching or one-way causal connection characterizes the relationship between the economy and culture. There are, instead, continuities of various kinds across different sites.[73] The stress on actual continuities across various sites and on the visible rather than the hidden character of discourse gives a particular slant to what it means to call *Jurassic Park* symptomatic. In Film Studies, the usual sense of interpretation's task for the symptomatic text is to produce the visible by exposing the concealed. But the most interesting thing about *Jurassic Park* is not that it foregrounds its economics through an excessive mise-en-scene, exposing fissures in an ideological project that would otherwise remain hidden. *Jurassic Park*'s project is hypervisible, not hidden – its own economics out there, on the surface and celebrating commercial success. A more appropriate strategy for assessing this visibility, and one adopted in this paper, is to describe the presence of this hypervisibility in different sites, from industry practices of merchandising to textual strategies of representation. *Jurassic Park* makes the logic of the lustre of capital visible. In doing so, the film points to a present marked by the imbrication of economic and cultural realms and by pervasive identifications with economic rationales, and to the way the lustre of capital itself is an attraction in a post-Fordist economy. Unlike stories whose ends are inscribed in the telling, this truth is contingent and can be unmade, that is, as long as we know how it was made.

73 For Foucault's defence of this position in relation to its implications for a progressive political practice, see Michel Foucault, 'History, discourse, discontinuity', *Salmagundi*, vol. 20 (Summer-Fall 1972), pp. 225–48.

Artificial women and male subjectivity in *42nd Street* and *Bride of Frankenstein*

LYN PHELAN

While *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935) appear on the surface to have little in common apart from a production context of Depression-era New Deal America – each is, after all, a classic of an entirely different genre – they deserve attention for their shared obsession with the status of sexual difference expressed through the motif of artificial and mechanized feminine bodies created by men more properly described as panic-stricken rather than authoritative. The films' explicit focus on the construction of a peculiarly charged femininity notwithstanding, male subjectivity is identified as the real focus of both films. In each, we see the risk inherent to flaunting the manufacture of the machinic feminine: the projection of artificiality tends to rebound on the maker. What this means is that while the artificial woman bolsters the masculine maker's naturalized claim to autonomy and agency, she simultaneously hints at its complication; she is fabricated, perhaps he is too. If *42nd Street* attempts to elide this tendency by insisting on the grounding agency of Julian Marsh (Warner Baxter), *Bride of Frankenstein* uses it to problematize the male subject through an oscillating identification of the male makers with their feminine creation.

The *42nd Street* chorines and the Bride of Frankenstein can be read as analogous figures of artificial femininity; indeed, as machine-women. The disciplinary machinery of *42nd Street*'s backstage sequences readies the thoroughly modern, urban, individuated and

non-machinic young women for their transformation into the abstracted components of a larger socioeconomic machine-body with an apparently infinite capacity for pleasurable renewal. In effect, the chorines become the 'exquisitely anonymous'[1] cogs and products of a rejuvenated capitalist industrial economy. The Bride is formed from a melange of recycled body parts treated as machinic in their capacity for reassemblage and restoration. Hooked up to an extravagant array of ersatz technology, she is brought to life in a blaze of electricity that both mimics and ridicules the industrialized mass production so glamorously performed by *42nd Street*'s chorines. The Bride's faltering movements are robotic in their disjointed precision and she is presumably programmed to mate. As artificial or machine-women, then, the chorines and the Bride are in different ways summoned to articulate naturalized – or problematized – male subjectivity.

The figures of the machine-maker and the human-as-machine have a long, loaded and gendered history. Ranging from eighteenth-century inventors of automata to the spectacularly automatized body of the assembly-line worker in Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), the alignment of human and machine can place the rational human at the centre of an ordered universe, raise the question of Promethean limits, promise progress, or threaten by producing the human as enslaved machine-appendage. When the machine in question is specifically produced as a woman, the stakes subtly change. The additional layer of difference more easily secures the distinction between male maker and female machine – autonomous subject and automated object – and allows the machine-woman to become also the explicit focus of eroticized fantasy and often of a special kind of sexualized disturbance.[2] Robot Maria (Brigitte Helm) in Fritz Lang's and Thea von Harbou's *Metropolis* (1927), built with the specific intention of vamping the industrial workers of Metropolis into a desirous and destructive frenzy, is a notable and pertinent example of this latter operation.[3] If Robot Maria is pure sex-machine – that is, a machine that both marks sexual difference and provokes sexual desire – so are the chorines and the Bride. But where Robot Maria is conceived as a fearful 'harbinger of chaos',[4] they are not. It is this departure from the rather more set theme of machine-woman as deathly seductress that makes *42nd Street* and *Bride of Frankenstein* worth examining in detail.

Where Robot Maria is aligned with turbulence and death, the chorines are associated with well-ordered life. As eroticized emblems of American assembly-line techniques, they declare the generativity of the fully rationalized management of time, work and pleasure informing a culture of mass-production and mass-consumption. Indeed, *42nd Street* ties a vision of the machine-woman not to the dangerous vamp or to factory servitude but to femininity disciplined by a masculine agent, and glamorous, post-Depression consumer plenty. To sustain this alignment, *42nd Street* relies on a rigidly

1 Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1947), p. 352.

2 The machine-woman is an especially favoured figure, for example, in nineteenth-century literature. E.T.A. Hoffmann's Olympia, and Villier's Hadaly are classic instances. E.T.A. Hoffmann, 'The Sandman', in *Tales of Hoffmann*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1982), pp. 85–126; Jean Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Tomorrow's Eve*, trans. Robert Martin Adams (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

3 Robot Maria, at the behest of the capitalist, Fredersen Senior (Alfred Abel), is created by the mad scientist, Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge), in a dazzling scene that clearly influenced Whale's depiction of the Bride's birth. Indeed, the more general influence of Lang's expressionism can be seen in both *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein*. On the simultaneously seductive and frightening femininity of Robot Maria, see Andreas Huyssen, 'The vamp and the machine: Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*', in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 70–81.

4 Ibid., p. 74.

gendered and hierarchized narrative emphasizing collectivity and benevolent authoritarian leadership; defined respectively as feminine and masculine. It is a pairing – or marriage – that only works where the collective social-economic body is rendered by the lush femininity of Busby Berkeley's thoroughly aestheticized and abstracted pleasure-machine and where, paradoxically, the male subject identified as its maker resists its allure. In this way, *42nd Street* attempts a projection of a reconciled, post-Depression future that is as rhythmic as the most well-oiled of machines and as seamless as it is bountiful. It is an aesthetic and narrative of progress that groans with effort and which *Bride of Frankenstein* rejects.

In contrast, *Bride* recasts – and debunks – the particular machinic metaphor driving *42nd Street*'s narrative of modernity to offer a scenario that is marvellously gothic in its obsessions. In place of *42nd Street*'s highly polished feminine surfaces, it produces the man-made woman not as smoothly anonymous social body but as singular, seamed and ambiguous. *Bride*'s mad Faustian science and anti-heterosexist frame allow the narrative to attach a different meaning to the artificiality so aligned in *42nd Street* with disciplined femininity. Crucially, *Bride* refuses to naturalize the masculine makers, Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive) and Septimus Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger) – both of whom are identified cryptically with the Bride herself – and reveals artificiality itself as the hallmark of subjectivity. Further, a hystericized camp aesthetic fuels a critique of the compulsory heterosexual matrix presumed by *42nd Street*'s instrumental productivity. If the Bride and male monster are created as a new Eve and Adam – their offspring the denizens of a new world – the possibility of their fertile coupling is a projected nightmare/dream of monstrous mass (re)production parallelling and perverting *42nd Street*'s vision of the future. The meaning of the Bride's refusal of that prospect and her consequent murder – with the joint consent of both intended groom and maker – is not at all straightforward; at the same time as it marks the violence attending the imposition of the sex/gender polarities sustaining *42nd Street*'s consumer paradise, it also signals *Bride of Frankenstein*'s final inability to move beyond them.

42nd Street

Julian Marsh paces fitfully before the selected chorines announcing the grinding schedule that will transform their inadequate bodies into the dancing machine of his vision. It is Marsh's final regenerative bid in the wake of the Wall Street Crash of October 1929. 'You're going to work and sweat and work some more', he warns them. 'You're going to work days and you're going to work nights, and you're going to work between times when I think you need it.

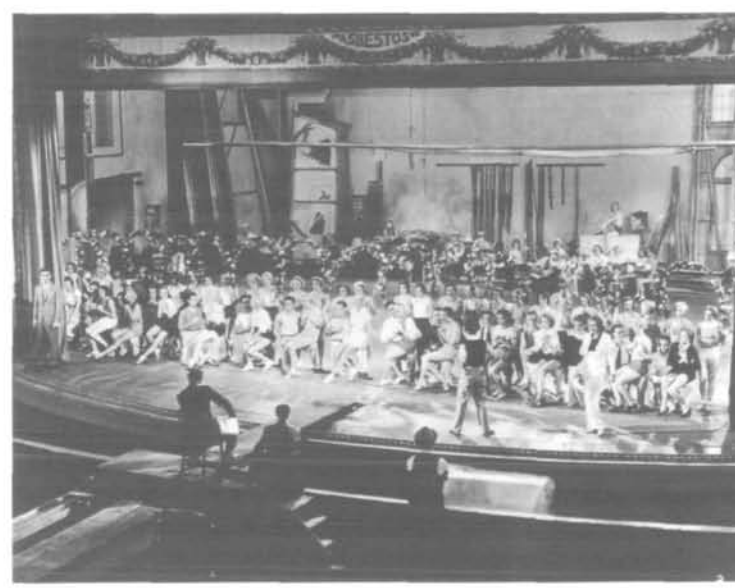
You're going to dance until your feet fall off and you're not able to stand up any longer.' Marsh's panic is fuelled by knowledge of his failing health and his pathologized financial dependence on others; the latter condition anxiously distanced from the borderline prostitution of the chorines.[5] Two hundred jobs depend upon his authoritarian leadership and Marsh, warned by his doctor that he is 'not a machine', risks nervous and physical breakdown to extract value from the raw material of the chorus line. Invoking the collision of bodies-as-machines and capital in the social and economic context of Depression-era America – and the promises of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal – *42nd Street* supports a rhetoric of getting work and channelling human energy towards the creation of profit defined as mutually, if not equally, beneficial.[6] In so doing, it establishes a split-level structure that requires closer examination. A fast-paced, wise-cracking backstage story of moulding diverse female characters into the seamless collectivity of the ideal chorus line by a male director is yoked to Busby Berkeley's aestheticized musical extravaganzas.[7]

The end result, superficially at least, seems an arbitrary, even incongruous, coupling that suggests the two levels are not intended to match in any banally realistic way. Routines seen in rehearsal, for example, do not make it to the final show; those that do, appear to exceed the limits of stage space. However, a strategic purpose is served. The gap that opens between these levels creates a means whereby Julian Marsh can be simultaneously asserted as the maker of a marvellous machine – the feminine spectacle of the musical numbers – and protected from the mechanized, collectivized fate of the chorines. In short, it sustains a dichotomy that naturalizes the

5 The Depression-era pre-Code context allows recognition of certain exigencies. The alternative – and supplement – to being cast in the show is to be 'kept'. Peggy Sawyer, the virginal ingenue, is the only character untainted by such associations. For an excellent account of representations of female prostitution and discourses of gold digging in *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn Le Roy, 1933), see Pamela Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 74–84.

6 *42nd Street*'s New York release in March 1933 coincided with Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential inauguration, and publicity posters for the film proclaimed the 'New Deal' it inaugurated in entertainment.

7 *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon), released by Warners in the same year, likewise adhere to this formula.



***42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933). Picture courtesy: BFI Stills.**

gendering of production and commodified spectacle as masculine and feminine respectively.

It is a differentiation that is required because the backstage narrative also tends to align Marsh with the chorines; specifically through the trope of prostitution. *42nd Street* frankly links the entertainment business and prostitution: to audition for a show is to offer one's body for sale. During the cattle call in the first minutes of the film, crowds of experienced chorus girls line up and lift their skirts so that legs can be assessed by potential hirers. To be new to the process is to be marked as the blushing virgin and, therefore, ripe for ridicule: witness Peggy Sawyer's (Ruby Keeler's) naive and bumbling attempts to make the final forty and another chorine's racy contempt: 'You looking for someone – or just shopping around?' Prostitution is signalled quite explicitly in the backstage dialogue as a strategy used by the chorines to supplement their incomes. Venal and sophisticated, the old hands trade wisecracks; Anytime Annie (Ginger Rogers), so named because '[s]he only said 'no' once, and then she didn't hear the question', good-naturedly assesses one of the other chorines for Lorraine (Una Merkel): 'She's such a nice girl. She makes $45 a week and sends her mother $100 of it.'

Like the chorines, Marsh is self-confessedly in the show for one reason only – 'money' – and this presents *42nd Street* with the problem of establishing a distance between the collective prostitution of the chorines and the 'for sale' male body of Julian Marsh. Indeed, the emphasis on contracts in the opening scenes of the film – a montage sequence presents first the star, Dorothy Brock (Bebe Daniels), and then Julian Marsh signing up for the show – marks relationships within the narrative as primarily economic at the same time as it works both to align and to differentiate positions inscribed as feminine and masculine. The contracts are problematically both the price tag of the commodity (Brock) and an assertion of autonomy generated by relations of consent, reciprocity and free market exchange (Marsh). Marsh attempts to evade the taint of economic dependence and its link with mechanical sexual exchange through positioning himself as economic agent; but while the show's finance depends on his acceptance of Brock who is in turn 'kept' by the show's investor Abner Dillon (Guy Kibbee) – with whom she is having an affair and upon whom her continuing employment relies – he cannot claim his own financial or social autonomy with any confidence.[8] At any moment Dorothy Brock may choose to end the affair with Dillon or to insist on other terms and the financial rug would be pulled out from underneath Marsh's feet. While the conceit of the backstage musical is a claim to show the 'real' side of the entertainment business and the process of putting on a show, in fact, the separation of levels – backstage from musical spectacle – attempts a resolution of this dilemma of agency. When Marsh converts the feminine venality and commodification of the motley

8 Parallelling this is the relationship between Brock and Pat Denning (George Brent). Down on his luck, he receives money from her but finally rejects this arrangement because, as he points out, there are unpleasant names for men 'kept' by women.

backstage chorines into a disciplined dancing machine, he escapes venality and commodification himself.

Moreover, to the extent that the dancing machine created by Julian Marsh is designed to simulate the promised New Deal harmony and prosperity, the metamorphoses it performs are not intended to represent those available in the impoverished present but transformations hovering in a near and fabulous future. We get an inkling of the gendered terms of this operation – the polarization of masculine production and feminine spectacle – in, for example, the transmutation of the gangly, earthbound amateurism of Peggy Sawyer in rehearsal – 'thudding away, doggedly on the beat' and, in defiance of the rules of proficient tap dancing, watching her feet – into Busby Berkeley's polished display.[9] It is a development that marks the erasure of the inevitably deficient and lumpen physicality of the female bodies we have seen in rehearsal and their replacement by perfectly meshing machine-parts. However, while *42nd Street* strategically locates the source of the feminine machine in the grounding masculine agency of Julian Marsh, the more the film insists that together they underwrite a self-regenerating capitalism characterized by equilibrium and pleasure, the more wishful and double-edged that fantasy appears. Paradoxically, to insist is to draw attention not only to the construction of the feminine machine – which, if self-regenerating, achieves a sort of autonomy denied here – but also to problematize the terms of Marsh's naturalized claim to be its maker.

Siegfried Kracauer's well-known 1927 analysis of the Tiller Girls, like *42nd Street*, takes the mass-produced and mechanized female

9 J. Hoberman, *42nd Street* (London: British Film Institute, 1993), p. 61

***42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933). Picture courtesy: BFI Stills.**

body as peculiarly emblematic of American industrial modes and might, and provides insight into the ambiguity of the fantasy.[10] For Kracauer, the chorine models both a new kind of worker and the ambivalent abstractness defining capitalist production and exchange circuits.[11] The chorus line, like the assembly line, dissects, isolates and serializes. They 'are no longer individual girls', Kracauer declares, 'but indissoluble girl clusters whose movements are demonstrations of mathematics'.[12] It is this tendency of the chorus-line as ornament to metamorphose into anonymous shape-shifting geometry that presents the New Deal ethos of *42nd Street* with something of a dilemma. On the one hand, the film attempts to soothe anxiety that capitalism is fundamentally 'inhuman' by linking New Deal government intervention to fully rationalized industrial production processes, an ethos of collective endeavour, jobs creation and consumption. Simultaneously, Busby Berkeley's spectacle of conveyor-belt femininity while aligning capitalist processes with sheer, albeit deferred, pleasure, constantly threatens to tip the balance in favour of a reversion to pure abstraction that delights in the body's reduction to a formal unit in an apparently infinite and shifting circuit of exchange.

To understand how *42nd Street* links this projection to a remystification of masculine agency, it is necessary to consider the grounding of Busby Berkeley's otherwise free-floating ornament in the backstage 'real' of the film. If Kracauer identifies the mass ornament as tending to 'take place in a vacuum',[13] *42nd Street* activates a gravitational pull that identifies context and source as New Deal America and the ascetic work ethic of Julian Marsh. To do this, *42nd Street* must simultaneously maintain Marsh as 'not a machine' and transform the individual women of the chorus into the mechanized collectivity of Busby Berkeley's chorines. The promise that the film makes is only realizable if this relationship can be made to hold. Both prior to and following Busby Berkeley's feminine spectacle, the backstage plot is privileged as the site of the 'real' in the film, and indeed realistic criteria structure the backstage narrative to a conspicuous degree, playing a major role in both the promotion of *42nd Street* and its commercial success.[14] Rather than ending on the celebratory high of the show's finale, as is more typical of the musical genre, *42nd Street* returns to the down-beat verisimilitude of the backstage. Providing an explicitly masculine coded referent, Marsh's self-imposed exile from the performance and final vigil on the staircase is marked by a grimy solitude that is in stark contrast to the promiscuous luxury of mass-produced femininity within the Busby Berkeley ornament. *42nd Street* almost groans with the effort of sustaining Marsh as exhausted but authentic subject, authorizing but not absorbed by the collective and consumerist ethos underpinning New Deal ideology.

To consider the refashioning of the chorine's body that allows the

10 Note that Kracauer refers to the Tiller Girls throughout the essay as American. Siegfried Kracauer, 'The mass ornament', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 75–88. They were, in fact, English.

11 Ibid., pp. 82–3.

12 Ibid., pp. 75–6 For some excellent feminist responses to Kracauer's 'The mass ornament' and his treatment of femininity more generally, see Sabine Hake, 'Girls and crisis: the other side of diversion', *New German Critique*, no. 40 (1987), pp. 147–64; Patrice Petro, 'Modernity and mass culture in Weimar: contours of a discourse on sexuality in early theories of perception and representation', *New German Critique*, no. 40 (1987), pp. 115–46; and Heide Schlüpmann, 'Phenomenology of film: on Siegfried Kracauer's writings of the 1920s', *New German Critique*, no. 40 (1987), pp. 97–114.

13 Kracauer, 'The mass ornament', p. 77.

14 Mordaunt Hall's 1933 review of the film notes: 'There was a time when spectators were satiated with backstage stuff, but here it is pictured brightly and with a degree of authenticity that makes it diverting'. Mordaunt Hall, 'Putting on a show', review of *42nd Street*, *New York Times*, 10 March 1933, reprinted in *The New York Times Film Reviews 1913–1968* (New York: *New York Times* and Arno Press, 1970), p. 916.

Busby Berkeley ornament to function as abstracted spectacle and Julian Marsh as its source, it is necessary to move beyond Kracauer's always already inert and feminine ornamentality. The production of the 'docile' body, Michel Foucault tells us, is a far from passive activity.[15] Foucault could be describing Marsh's minimalist rehearsal techniques and the chorines' increasingly precise and uniform tap routines in this summary of the forging of the ideal soldier: 'out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit'.[16] To an astounding degree, *42nd Street* lays bare the heavily gendered disciplinary machinery of industrial capitalism as the automated chorines perform both the plastic worker-bodies and the eroticized commodity-bodies which it requires. The industrialist Henry Ford's well-known 'horror of waste' and obsessive quest to eliminate it culminates in a dictum that Busby Berkeley seems to have followed in turning dancers into chorines: 'Start with an article that suits and then study to find some way of eliminating the entirely useless parts'; this applies, Ford writes, not only to cars but to 'everything'.[17] The just-so expenditure of materials and human energy, that – according to Ford – is prerequisite to the mass-production of affordable goods and the maximization of profit, is restaged here. Busby Berkeley's deskilled routines, having erased idiosyncratic dancer styles, signal plenitude through lush costuming and the kaleidoscopic multiplication of look-alike chorines. As the repetitive drill of rehearsal welds the chorines into ordered units, defined by rhythm and velocity, which have internalized Marsh's splenetic 'Faster! Faster!', Berkeley's peculiarly ergonomic choreography eliminates individuated gesture and fatigue as it optimizes energy expenditure – and lets the camera do the work. Rather than producing Ford's fantasy of the 'universal car' reduced to the minimum number of constructional units, Busby Berkeley produces the thoroughly affectless universal woman – the chorine – as cinematic special effect.

'Shuffle off to Buffalo', the first Busby Berkeley number, marks the transition from authentic backstage to his unbound cinema; in so doing, it also signals the terms governing the conversion of the 'real' backstage dancers into fully mechanized chorines. In an enjoyably literal demonstration of the 'marriage of technology and sexuality' that Claudia Springer has identified as so fascinating to twentieth-century industrial society,[18] the honeymoon train, bound for the cut-price erotic pleasures of Niagara Falls, splits down the centre to reveal the predominantly female and pyjama-clad bodies encased within its sleeper compartments. The limits imposed by theatrical space and vision are progressively abandoned in the next number as the gormless and not-at-all virile Billy Lawler (Dick Powell) warbles

15 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 136.

16 Ibid., p. 135. Foucault also draws a distinction between what he calls the 'contractual link' – which carries connotations and expectations of autonomy and reciprocity – and the 'disciplinary link' defined precisely by its non-reversibility. Ibid., pp. 222–3. Where, as we have seen, Marsh is figured as trying to sustain the former as governing his involvement with the show, the chorines are explicitly assembled via the latter. For other readings that relate Foucault's disciplinary machinery to the chorus line, and, more generally, to a rhetoric of mechanized female bodies, see, respectively, Patricia Mellencamp, 'The sexual economics of *Gold Diggers of 1933*', in Peter Lehman (ed.), *Close Viewings: an Anthology of New Film Criticism* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University Press, 1990), pp. 182–83; and Katherine Stubbs, 'Mechanizing the female: discourse and control in the industrial economy', *differences*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1995), pp. 149–50.

17 Henry Ford, *Ford on Management: Harnessing the American Spirit* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 11, 10, 14, 56.

18 Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 7.

'I'm Young and Healthy' to Toby Wing and dozens of other smiling chorines who are dressed as burlesque-brides and rotating with mute efficiency on the elevated platform before him. A curious intensification of both female fleshliness and abstract uniformity is achieved as Berkeley's camera one moment swoops for a closer look at a chorine's dimpled knee and the next ascends to the God's-eye-view provided by the overhead shot that dissolves the individuals into massed kaleidoscopic pattern. Everyday materiality is suspended completely as stage and then city are encompassed and redefined in the ecstatic tap-symphony '42nd Street'. Squadrons of inexhaustible tap-dancing Sawyer-lookalikes advance in purposeful formation. In a space that Lucy Fischer has described as 'quintessentially fantastic',[19] corporeality gives way to kitsch architectonics as the chorines – painted skyscraper cut-outs attached – turn to form an all-singing all-dancing city skyline.

The number ends as Billy Lawler and Peggy, emerging from the massed display of chorines, duplicate their earlier backstage embrace to mark a romance that, in this moment, straddles both levels of the film.[20] Significantly, *42nd Street* imbues their romantic partnership with an optimism that highlights and counters the more ambivalent portrayals of heterosexual love and marriage predominating elsewhere.[21] The backstage plot, for example, juxtaposes their youthful good humour and energetic commitment to the success of the show with the self-interest and ongoing romantic problems of the show's original star, Dorothy Brock, and her ex-vaudeville partner and lover, Pat Denning.[22] The latter couple's difficulties are identified as flowing directly from Brock's problematic position as female star, specifically, the financial dependency her stardom inflicts on him and the sexual pragmatism it requires of her.[23] Importantly, Peggy stages the possibility of a different kind of female stardom (and concomitantly, a different construction of femininity); one arising from, and more in tune with, the collective ethos demanded by the times. Where the more expensive star's sexual impropriety is constructed as undisciplined and self-indulgent because it threatens the two hundred jobs riding on the show's success, Peggy's value derives precisely from an eagerness to put herself entirely at Marsh's disposal and so allow him to harness all her energies to the needs of the show. Not coincidentally, this includes her newly awakened libido and it is more than fitting that Peggy's first kiss is delivered by Marsh in a rehearsal sequence. Unable to bear her repeatedly passionless rendition of a key line, he asks if she has ever been in love. Her negative reply motivates a kiss that both visibly stirs a libidinal response in Peggy and effectively injects her subsequent performance with the necessary conviction. It is a sequence that not only emphasizes Marsh's instrumentality as he optimizes all the forces at his command but demonstrates the logic of conversion operating in the film. Sexual energy converts into work energy

19 Lucy Fischer, 'The image of woman as image: the optical politics of *Dames*', in Rick Altman (ed.), *Genre: The Musical – a Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1986), p. 73.

20 Rick Altman's authoritative study argues that intertwining the success of the show and the formation of the romantic couple is characteristic of the backstage musical genre and part of a syntax that *42nd Street* helped to inaugurate. Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington, Indiana, IN: Indiana Press, 1987), p. 227.

21 The lyrics to 'Shuffle off to Buffalo', for example, provide a deliciously droll commentary on the anything-but-long-term prospects of the featured honeymoon couple ('Matrimony is baloney / She'll be wanting alimony in a year or so'), and the proliferation of brides in 'Young and Healthy' works rather more convincingly as a paean to promiscuous desire than a celebration of monogamous coupledom.

22 In a number of key ways, Brock is aligned with the past and with outmoded styles of entertainment. The casting of silent film star Bebe Daniels is important in this respect.

23 Indeed, both her role as quasi-mistress to the show's principal backer, Abner Dillon, and Denning's role as 'kept' man are constructed as undermining the latter's masculinity in ways that can only be made good by Brock's eventual decision to renounce stardom, marry and return with Denning to second-rate vaudeville.

which, in turn, produces a sexualized spectacle/commodity. That a young and optimistic romantic couple should, in turn, emerge from this spectacle tends to forestall a reading of this process as irredeemably exploitative and incorporative and to celebrate, instead, a reconciliation of contradiction: here, the discipline of work begets love and pleasure.[24]

But where does that affirmation leave the asceticism and isolation of Julian Marsh? In Hoffmann's story 'The Sandman', a besotted Nathaniel takes to the floor with the mechanical doll Olympia.[25] She dances with the 'singular exactitude of rhythm' that marks her status as machine and makes of Nathaniel a laughing-stock for mistaking her clockwork perfection for the real thing – a flesh-and-blood woman.[26] But too drunk with desire and wine to notice, he no longer wishes to dance with anyone else. Like Nathaniel, Marsh desires the perfection of the machine-woman, but not as exceptional love-object. On the contrary, Marsh's intensity derives from an economic imperative that the mechanized chorines collectively and repeatedly reproduce as commodity the perfection he has actualized. But, as Marsh observes, the building of machines is a risky business and the terms of production rebound all too easily on the maker and he mourns in advance an inevitable misreading by the audience: 'Oh, I know what they'll say. They'll like it, they've got to. They'll say Marsh is a wizard, he turns them out like clockwork. The guy isn't human, he's a machine'. Given this slide from the automation of the perfected product to the producer as automated, it is no surprise, then, that *42nd Street* insists on Marsh's frailty: lonely, ill and permanently on the verge of another breakdown, Marsh embodies the non-machinic. Finally, and paradoxically, it is not mastery that underwrites generative masculine agency but authoritarianism refigured as imperfect, sacrificial and human.

Nathaniel's mistake is that he thinks the doll Olympia is human. In *42nd Street*, discrepancy does not reside in the difference between 'real' and machine-women. After all, both levels operate according to a disciplinary logic geared towards the production of the chorines as mechanized. Curiously, the most significantly dissonant moment in *42nd Street* occurs with the return to Marsh at the end of the film. It comes after Berkeley's preposterously exuberant grand finale and is loaded with the weight of the 'real'. Leaning for support against the alley wall and wearily smoking, Marsh listens to the comments of the theatre audience as they leave: 'These directors make me sick . . . name all over the programme. Takes all the credit.' 'Without a kid like Sawyer, he wouldn't have a show.' 'Marsh'll probably say he discovered her.' Inverting and extending Marsh's resigned prophecy, the diegetic spectators mistake the product for the creative source. Clearly it is a moment designed to double back on itself. The confounding of creator and created is set before the second audience – the film audience – to reject as ridiculously naive. After all,

24 See Altman, *The American Film Musical*, p. 231; and Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: British Film Institute, 1982), p. 71.

25 Hoffmann, 'The Sandman', pp. 85–126.

26 Ibid., p. 114.

addressed as altogether more sophisticated and knowing, the film audience has had access to the real story – has *seen* more – and knows that, Svengali-like, Marsh created Sawyer. And yet a residual uncertainty clings to this assertion of precedence. We have seen Marsh manufacture Peggy Sawyer as star of the show but the profoundly unnatural abstraction and proliferation of chorines – Peggy included – in full Berkeleyan flight do not match what has been witnessed in the overdetermined authenticity of Marsh's backstage real. Indeed, Berkeley's spectacles celebrate a release from the limitations of the diegetic director, Marsh.

Finally, the gap between the two levels of the film – the Bacon-directed rehearsal sequences and epilogue and Berkeley's polished spectacle – allows Marsh to assert himself as creator and thus human agent, but it also underscores the illusion upon which his claim is based. Autonomy is inscribed in Marsh because he *made* the chorines and controls the abstractions they figure. Oddly, that autonomy is defined by the human fragility that differentiates him from the machinic. But, there is a catch: the chorines' perfect abstractions are only achieved by substituting the technological prosthesis of Berkeley's camera for Marsh's inadequate eye.[27] A result is *42nd Street*'s simultaneous and wholly ambiguous celebration and elision of precisely this substitution, which occurs, as it were, when Marsh's back is turned. The point is that the split-level structure of the film is an attempt to let the masculine agent have it both ways. The humanity of Marsh – figured as exhaustion and exclusion from the machine – is sustained and valorized, in contrast to the collectivized machine-women consumed by and constituting Berkeley's spectacle, as Marsh's insistence that he is not a machine is verified by a body that is permanently on the brink of collapse. However, what is more significant is that in attempting the rescue, *42nd Street* makes curiously legible the gendered terms and competing forces informing the subject of capitalism in its moment of crisis as the double logic of the market called upon to restore its economic base insists, on the one hand, on the self-identical agent and on the other, the process of de-individualization sustaining the abstracted commodity–consumer body. If the latter is performed by the female–spectacle–body and the male–production–body is inscribed as its source, there is some irony and rather a lot of anxiety, then, in the Berkeleyan machine's final excretion of the peculiarly ascetic Marsh – albeit, without his knowledge – as surplus to its requirements.

27 See Mary Ann Doane's discussion of Busby Berkeley and technological supplementation of the 'ontologically frail' human body in 'Technology's body: cinematic vision in modernity', *differences*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1993), pp. 3–16.

Bride of Frankenstein

Bride of Frankenstein's gothic graves and mountaintop laboratory may seem a long way from the social and political contexts of

Depression-era America and the fast-talking modernity of *42nd Street*, but a focus on the spectacle of manufacturing an artificial woman from component parts nevertheless provides a persuasive point of comparison. In seeking to revive a narrative of progress, *42nd Street* invokes a metaphor of the economy as an essentially orderly mechanism in need of repair. Crucially, the film grounds this narrative in the valorized masculine agency of Julian Marsh and a strictly hierarchized and gendered division of labour. A central concern is the restoration of order and prosperity through the imposition of good-humoured, collective discipline. Classic horror films such as Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and its sequel, *Bride*, stage a strikingly different cinematic relation to the period.[28] Rather than engineering remedies for the stalled national machine-body, they seemed to acquire force from the savage social and economic dislocations of the 1930s to present spectacles of monster-wrought destruction that were welcomed by contemporary audiences with recognition and delight.[29] Moreover, Whale's Frankenstein films dramatize perverse and anachronistic uses of technology which both draw on and undermine the progressivist machine-aesthetic driving *42nd Street*'s implicitly prescriptive response to the Depression.[30] The Bride stands in all her seamed splendour at the imaginative centre of a film that disdains the gendered dichotomies structuring *42nd Street*'s machine metaphor and the discourse of masculine authenticity supported by it, to offer her bizarre bodily reconstruction as a particularly disquieting counter-image to the harmonious, feminized collectivity performed by *42nd Street*'s mechanized chorines.

Produced at a time when a gendered discourse of distinct roles was achieving renewed currency – in casting the breadwinner role as masculine, New Deal programmes, for example, tended to institutionalize women's financial dependency[31] – and a reactivated sexual conservatism was finding official expression in such documents as the 1934 Production Code,[32] *Bride of Frankenstein* offers an exemplary instance of what film theorist Rhona Berenstein identifies as central to horror films of this period: a capacity to generate especially volatile narrative spaces for the staging and negotiation of complex gender and sexual identities.[33] Indeed, by preferring artifice to authenticity – and consistently structuring its representations of character and narrative accordingly – *Bride* actively thwarts the production of a naturalized account of male subjectivity. From the very start, *Bride* privileges the art of storytelling and of devising fictions that exist inside other fictions. Originary sources are invoked with the explicit purpose of displacing the authority that conventionally goes with them and of subsequently reworking the malleable material provided. Indeed, *Bride* skews enough of the concerns of Mary Shelley's novel – already ambiguous in its moral stance – to require a reading that is less focused on the wrongness of unnatural creation than on its desirability.[34]

28 Whale's films belong to a cycle that, among others, includes *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931), *Island of Lost Souls* (Erle C. Kenton, 1932), and *Mad Love* (Karl Freund, 1935). Significantly, horror proved as crucial to the flagging fortunes of Universal, the studio most identified with it, as the revival of the backstage musical was to those of Warner Bros. See Rhona J. Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality, and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 14–15; and Michael Brunas, John Brunas, and Tom Weaver, *Universal Horrors: The Studio's Classic Films, 1931–1946* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1990), p. 3.

29 See Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15; J-P. Telotte, *Replications: a Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 75; and David J. Skal, *Screams of Reason: Mad Science and Modern Culture* (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 130.

30 Horror film theorist David Skal draws attention to this dynamic, for example, with his neat identification of Karloff's Frankenstein as a 'designer's nightmare' utterly suited to the position of uncanny 'gargoyle' on Manhattan's recently completed monument to the machine-age, the Chrysler building. David J. Skal, *The Monster Show: a Cultural History of Horror* (New York: Norton, 1993), pp. 132–3. In a similar vein, Alberto Manguel compares Whale's Bride with a number of Dada/Surrealist artworks, among them Marcel Duchamp's 'The bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even' (1923). Alberto Manguel, *Bride of Frankenstein* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), pp. 55–62.

31 Despite the language of common sacrifice, all groups did not derive equal benefit from New Deal Legislation and working women suffered particular discrimination. The Economy Act

of 1933, for example, barred members of the same family from federal employment and further legislation excluded married women from public employment such as teaching. National Recovery Administration codes allowed women to be paid less than men for the same jobs. See Susan Ware, 'Women and the New Deal', in Harvard Sitkoff (ed.), *Fifty Years Later: the New Deal Evaluated* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1985), p. 123; and Gwendolyn Mink, 'The lady and the tramp: gender, race and the origins of the American welfare state', in Linda Gordon (ed.), *Women, the State, and Welfare* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 111–12.

32 Among other things, the Code contained a provision that '[t]he sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld', as well as a more general ban on the depiction of what it termed 'sex perversion', an overarching and non-specific category covering homosexuality along with a myriad other practices considered aberrant. See Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood Censorship and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), pp. 284–5.

33 Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 203.

34 The narrative of *Bride of Frankenstein* derives from the monster's request in Shelley's novel for a female companion. Chapter 20 of *Frankenstein* tells of Victor's half-completion of this task and of the revulsion and 'trembling . . . passion' with which he tears 'the thing' to pieces. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 166.

35 This, of course, is not the same thing as claiming that heterosexuality is *all* that exists in *42nd Street*. On the contrary, there are various relationships and moments that are clearly open to other readings. However,

Bride opens with Lord Byron (Gavin Gordon), Percy Bysshe Shelley (Douglas Walton), and Mary Shelley (Elsa Lanchester) gathered together in the elegant, candlelit sitting room of what is presumably the Villa Diodati as lightning streaks the night sky. Safe within, Byron dwells on the 'astonishing' fact that the angelic Mary has composed a tale so frightening that it 'sent [his] blood into icy creeps'. His ghoulish voiceover offers a delighted precis of events from the 1931 film simultaneously presented in tableaux – Henry Frankenstein's creation of the Monster (Boris Karloff) from 'cadavers out of rifled graves;' the monster's torture at the hands of the angry villagers; Henry's and the Monster's apparent deaths. While it is Mary – the author of the tale – who specifies the Promethean moral of the story, Lanchester's delivery is deliberately risible. 'The publishers did not see', she intones breathlessly, 'that my purpose was to write a moral lesson of the punishment that befell a mortal man who dared to emulate God'. Praised as a strangely beautiful and great horror film, *Bride* was also recognized by many as a camp classic brimming with a knowing, sexually loaded humour. Indeed, it is the famously bisexual Byron's libidinous and snappy response that is closer to the way James Whale – who lived openly as a homosexual man in 1930s Hollywood – invites us to enjoy this perverse film about two men who make a bride for a male monster: 'Well, whatever your purpose, my dear, I take great relish in savouring each separate horror. I roll them over on my tongue.' The openness of recycled fictions, not morality, is at issue here, and with the criteria of authenticity removed, both narrative and identity are denied the ground of the one true source, and the manufacture of artificial creatures is tied firmly to countering naturalized sex/gender identities. Accordingly, masculinity in *Bride* is never taken for granted nor produced in an exclusively heterosexual relation sustained by and contrasted to feminine artifice. On the contrary, *Bride* actively denaturalizes masculinity and locates it within triangulated structures that privilege homoeroticism.

Sustaining Marsh as autonomous male subject in *42nd Street* requires the operation of a strong binary that insists on the sexualized differences between Marsh as maker and the chorines as machine. It is a binary structure that relies on utterly polarized and fixed sex/gender positions and which bears a strong presumption of heterosexuality.[35] Bound up with *Bride*'s rejection of *42nd Street*'s progressivist prescription is an attack on this binary through a narrative that speaks both directly and indirectly of sex and gender identities as constructed, or artificial, and as interested in aims other than those determined by the (re)productivity of family-bound heterosexuality. A key way that *Bride* maps this different account is through the production of triangles of two men and one woman that conform to the pattern Eve Sedgwick has so effectively described in her work on male homosociality.[36] Indeed, the film positively flaunts

what Sedgwick suggests is the potentially destabilizing capacity of visible male homoeroticism.[37] The thoroughly camp opening sequence, for example, organizes Mary, Byron and Percy in the first instance of what turns out to be a series of permutations of that triangular structure. The possibility of male same-sex desire is encoded in the consistent return to Byron and Percy as the couple emerging from the threesome. Attention is drawn first to the aura of unconventionality, even danger, clinging to the familial and sexual arrangements of the characters' historical personas. Byron describes himself as 'England's greatest sinner' and Mary is invoked as a notorious creator of monsters.

An intricate series of shots, framing the characters both separately and in various combinations – although only Byron and Percy together – establishes physical proximity between the two men. Byron clasps the back of the latter's chair, as Percy, clutching his pen and writing furiously on the papers in his lap, devotes himself to scarcely disguised onanistic activity. The wedding night of Henry and Elizabeth (Valerie Hobson) is similarly structured. With the arrival of the elderly dandy, Dr Septimus Pretorius, a triangle forms – Elizabeth and Dr Pretorius are positioned in relation to the temporarily bedridden Henry – which then reduces to the male pair: Pretorius, 'booted out' of the university for 'knowing too much', seduces a compliant Henry away from his legal bride and bed to engage in the creation of life with him.

The climactic creation and destruction scenes produce three more variations of this triangular structure. The first stages a parodic wedding ceremony with Henry and Pretorius, the unnatural couple who together have built this marvellous creature, flanking the Bride. Here, the manufacture of an artificial woman is closely connected to valorization of non-normative, and in *Bride*'s terms that primarily means non-heterosexual masculinity. In contrast, a second triangle illustrates Sedgwick's strictly normative homosociality in action. The Monster as rejected groom, and with his hand on the lever that will bring the building down around them, seeks consent from the artificial woman's maker/father for the murder-suicide he is about to commit. Henry gives that consent and the Bride, figured as object of exchange between these two masculine points, is violently eliminated. It is a strict and brutal transaction between positions defined in relation to the heterosexual and patriarchal privilege accruing to the father-of-the-bride and groom, and so savage that it unmasks, rather than approves, the operations sustaining their power. A third triangle is comprised of those unnatural beings subsequently destroyed as the result of that privilege being exercised, Pretorius, the Monster and the Bride. Emerging from these interlocking triangles is the 'happy' ending demanded by the genre and restitution of what looks like normative masculinity expressed through Henry's return to heterosexual coupledom. We see very clearly as *Bride*'s

the narrative of progress that it tries to produce is tied to a compulsorily heterosexual matrix.

36 Sedgwick defines 'male homosocial desire' as a continuum of 'male bonds that includes, but is not limited to the "homosexual"' and argues that patriarchal culture is defined by exchanges and relations between men that deny the possibility of male same-sex desire. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 85.

37 Ibid. For stimulating readings of *Bride of Frankenstein* that engage with Sedgwick and make similar claims, see Elizabeth Young, 'Here comes the bride: wedding, gender and race in *Bride of Frankenstein*', in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 309–37; Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, pp. 128–53; and Harry M. Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 62. For an analysis of the various 'love triangle[s]' in *Bride* that does not rely on Sedgwickian homosociality, see Martin F. Norden, 'Sexual references in James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein*', in Donald Palumbo (ed.), *Eros in the Mind's Eye: Sexuality and the Fantastic in Art and Film* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 143–9.

triangles shift from those privileging artifice and non-normative identities to those violently and homophobically reinstating patriarchal right – and the heterosexual couple defined in relation to that – the obstinacy attending gender (and genre) injunctions demanding the removal of unnatural creatures.[38] Further, *Bride* makes unusually apparent the extent to which the fate of the final pair is underpinned by violence and dissatisfaction; at no other point in the narrative, for example, is Elizabeth Henry's *first* choice.

Bride's insistence on the presence of male homoeroticism, whether it is finally allowed to survive or not, is directly linked to the construction of unnatural masculine and feminine identities that are repeatedly given precedence over their naturalized counterparts. Such prioritization invariably emerges from and haunts the triangulated relations already identified and is fuelled by an energy marked as hysterical. That a swirling, fever-pitch intensity imbues the film at every level is enough reason to use this word in its ordinary sense. But the Freudian understanding of hysteria as the pathological and sometimes productive short-circuiting generated by the injunction to assume one's proper gender/sexual identity is even more pertinent here.[39] The production of Henry Frankenstein as an exemplary male hysteric with a conspicuous 'capacity for all kinds of excess'[40] and a rare talent for histrionics empowers *Bride*'s attack on the authority generally claimed by normative masculinity.[41]

So the consistently hysterical Henry's failure to embrace the traditional patriarchal role with appropriate relish should be understood in this critical context and can be seen most plainly on what is (or was to have been) his wedding night. Prostrated, he claws at the bed linen as Elizabeth proposes a trip abroad to help him 'forget' the tragic consequences of previous experiments in artificial life. 'If only I could', Henry chokes, as rigid terror gives way to raving exaltation in the god-like power so briefly tasted. Eyes shining, face aglow, body convulsed, Henry's paroxysm appears to reach a climax and to transfer to Elizabeth, who promptly hallucinates the presence of death in the room. 'It's coming for you', she insists, as a knocking is heard below. Perfectly in tune with Elizabeth's frantic premonition, Pretorius – all looming shadow and flickering light – demands she leave and invites Henry to 'probe' the mysteries of life with him.[42] At least two things are striking about this extraordinary scene. First, Henry's transparent reluctance to become husband and father; throughout *Bride*, he is unattracted by the promises of natural procreativity and the continuation of *his* line through authorized heterosexual coupling. The 1931 film ends with Henry's father lingering on the threshold of the wedding-night chamber. Looking forward to Henry's assumption of the paternal mantle, he drinks a somewhat premature toast to the 'son of Frankenstein' about to be conceived. *Bride* offers a reworking of that same night but with the disgraced professor of philosophy, Dr

38 Berenstein argues this is typical of classic horror films of the 1930s. Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, pp. 5–9. Of course, *natural* and *unnatural* as they are used throughout this argument should be read as enclosed by quotation marks and in the context of *Bride*'s insistent rejection of the values conventionally assigned them.

39 *Bride* is laced with symptoms described by Freud as characteristically suffered by hysterics. See Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 25–89; Sigmund Freud, 'Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria ('Dora')', in *Case Histories 1: 'Dora' and 'Little Hans'* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 44–98. Narrative inconsistency, both in the transition to the sequel and within *Bride of Frankenstein* itself, combines with a confusion of proper names and intermittently paralyzed and speechless characters to emphasize it as the prevailing condition. For example, when did Henry's father, whose comments close the 1931 film, die? For no good reason, 'Victor' of the novel is 'Henry' in both the 1931 and 1935 films. To further confuse the issue, the 1931 film included a character named Victor in the novel's Henry Clerval role. When Pretorius introduces himself, Minnie (Una O'Connor) repeats 'Pretorius' three times and concludes there's 'no such name'. The Monster, otherwise and traditionally nameless, nevertheless becomes known in popular parlance by his maker's name. And are Elizabeth and Henry married or not? The 1931 film ended with a toast to the happy couple. Pretorius calls Elizabeth 'Baroness Frankenstein', but Henry later declares that as soon as he is well, he is to be married. Further, who is the eponymous 'Bride of Frankenstein': Elizabeth, the soon to be created woman who is announced as precisely this by Pretorius; or, perhaps Pretorius, himself?

Pretorius, serving as a thoroughly queer surrogate for the eliminated patriarch. Henry's preference for the pursuit of artificial life is not presented here as an object lesson in the dangers of seduction by the hubristic and sterile but as a rejection of authorized conjugal coupling to patrilineal ends in favour of illegitimate creation. Second, that hysteria reaches a pitch and is stilled through the presence – and Henry's choice – of Pretorius, cheerfully depicted as an ageing and shameless agent of perversity.

But where hysteria, understood in psychoanalytic terms, has been described as overstatement without irony,[43] no one could miss the knowing black humour Pretorius brings to the excesses of *Bride*'s gothic camp. Understood as a sort of truth-telling by other means, hysteria may be spectacularly hyperbolic and stage oscillating sexual and gender identities – as it does here – but, by itself, it cannot move beyond the limitations of its status as pathology. Yet when inflected by camp, characterized for Susan Sontag by its 'love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration',[44] a compelling and perverse doublespeak that upends traditional hierarchies of value and scrutinizes foundationalist assumptions about authentic identities becomes possible.[45] Accordingly, *Bride* builds to the quintessentially camp moment when Pretorius entices Henry away from conjugal duty to reveal the results of his own lovingly completed experiments in the manufacture of artificial human beings. Pretorius has created a set of perfectly detailed and exquisitely costumed living miniatures – queen, king, archbishop, mermaid, devil and ballerina – cultural ideals or cliches, that could not be further from the relatively unadorned gigantism of the Monster and Bride.[46] Pretorius informs Henry the tiny humans were created from 'seed' – his own, we presume – but more than anything, they recall the clockwork automatons so meticulously constructed in the eighteenth century as charming, if useless, novelties. Unpacked from a small black coffin and exhibited in glass jars suggestive of both scientific experimentation and decorative display, the miniatures, like their creator the dandified Pretorius, are marked as decadent and ambiguously associated with death. Quoting and perversely reworking Genesis, Pretorius tempts Henry with a plan for creating new life that is not plagued by the sterility of these obsolescent curiosities: 'Leave the charnel house and follow the lead of nature – or of God, if you like your bible stories – *male* and *female* created he them. Be fruitful and multiply. Create a race, a man-made race, upon the face of the earth. Why not?' If heterosexual reproductivity is typically instituted by the biblical prescription as a natural and universalized condition, that is thoroughly undercut here by a prevailing camp context. In Pretorius's version, the Monster and Bride form an alternative Edenic couple whose identity and issue will qualify as 'man-made'. Not content simply to overturn nature and replace it with culture by inverting their value and flagrantly privileging the creation of artificial life, *Bride*

40 Baudelaire's rather neat summation of the form hysteria takes in men. See Charles Baudelaire, '*Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert', in *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. P.E. Charvet (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 252.

41 For accounts of male hysteria as a challenge to conventional notions of masculinity see, for example, Lynne Kirby, 'Male hysteria and early cinema', *Camera Obscura*, vol. 17 (1988), pp. 113–31; Mark S. Micale, 'Hysteria male/hysteria female: reflections on comparative gender construction in nineteenth-century France and Britain', in Marina Benjamin (ed.), *Science and Sensibility: Essays on Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780–1945* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 166–8; Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture 1830–1980* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 167–94; Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 64–77.

42 'Science', Pretorius reminds Henry, 'like love, has her little surprises'.

43 On hysteria lacking irony, see Showalter, *Hystories*, p. 27.

44 Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "camp"', in *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 275.

45 Jonathan Dollimore and Andrew Ross mount persuasive cases for seeing camp, which may assume a number of forms, as frequently and effectively mounting strategic 'attack[s]' on essentialized notions of identity. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 14–32, 310–12; and Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 151–61.

46 Cut from the final version of the script was a seventh figure to be played by Boris Karloff dressed as a baby. James Curtis, *James Whale: a New World of Gods and Monsters* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 247.

uses this most canonical of origin stories to mock the pretensions of both history and nature. What appears to be little more than a set piece where Pretorius is allowed to demonstrate the full extent of his outrageous and waspish eccentricity and to provide the impetus for Henry's decision to construct the Bride, in effect creates a moment where the economic and sexual orders of production and reproduction collide in an extraordinarily acute and contemptuous account of industrialized progress as it is routinely formulated. Underpinned by a theory of sexual difference and reproduction summoned as timeless, a narrative of progress leading from the decadent pre-industrial – as represented by the miniatures – to bountiful mass (re)production – figured by the monstrous couple – is established only to be promptly dismissed as absurd. The distinction between industrialized production and human reproduction collapses in the process and the breathtakingly perverse outcome is Pretorius's successful seduction of Henry culminating in their joint fabrication of an artificial woman, the Bride. Assembled piece by piece from recycled body parts, she crystallizes the logic of retrieval to which *Bride*'s gothic camp aspires, and, within these terms, death itself is rendered unstable: corpses neither lie peacefully nor remain intact; Christian resurrection is presented as burlesque, as for example, when Minnie in the role of Mary Magdalene discovers and testifies to having seen the risen Monster; and necrophilic desires are camped outrageously.[47]

If *42nd Street* follows a trajectory from individuated women to increasingly abstracted chorines, *Bride* tends towards the opposite direction: fragmented, inert parts from plural sources are reassembled to form a singular being whose body bears the marks of her construction and who represents an artificiality with which her makers are also identified. The luminous Bride is brought to life in a stunning, technology-powered 'electrical epiphany'[48] that is overtly phoney. Ostentatiously fantastic, the billowing smoke, flashing lights and assorted bogus electrical gadgetry – including a 'cosmic defuser' – produce Henry's and Pretorius's science as a mad, magical spectacle of transformation that is incapable of sustaining rather more progressivist machine-age narratives. While aspects of the Bride's construction mimic assembly line processes and her initial movements are machinic in their awkwardness, the visibly scarred Bride is nevertheless marked as specifically *not* the streamlined, mass-produced item upon which the industrialized commodity culture of post-Depression plenitude is predicated. Fittingly for one made rather than born of natural means, the Bride is unwrapped from mummy-like bindings before being displayed. Her famous Nefertiti-inspired, lightning-streaked hair standing on end, the newly gowned and coiffed Bride towers regally above Henry and Pretorius, her weird splendour contrasting starkly with the downright homeliness of the Monster. Both Shelley's novel and the 1931 film emphasize Frankenstein's desire to create a perfect man and his distress at the

47 The conviction that death lacks permanence, of course, overflows the confines of this single narrative to inhabit the many cinematic retellings of the Frankenstein story and the horror genre as a whole. While repetition, and thus the repetitive destruction of those marked as monsters, is certainly an aspect of the genre's investment in removing death's finality, the logic of reversal that characterizes *Bride* operates somewhat differently. As for necrophilia, this is most often associated with Pretorius and while adding a frisson to the horror, his necrophilic tendencies are primarily exhibited within the context of the enjoyably seditious character vignette. For example, as Pretorius partakes of a candle-lit supper with a skeletal companion and a bottle of wine he is interrupted by the fleeing Monster. 'I love dead. Hate living', is the latter's famous judgement on humanity. Pretorius can only agree as he invites the Monster to share a cigar. 'They are my only weakness', Pretorius not very convincingly assures him. Given that we have heard this before in relation to a love for gin, the question of exactly how many more vices Pretorius indulges remains wide open. Indeed, Andrew Ross describes a 'necrophilic economy' as precisely typifying camp practice. Ross, *No Respect*, pp. 151–2.

48 Christoph Asendorf, *Batteries of Life: On the History of Things and Their Perception in Modernity*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 158.

***Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935). Picture courtesy: BFI Stills.**

Monster's grotesque physiognomy. The distortion that defines his difference from the human as monstrous is repeated to entirely different effect in the Bride. Beautiful and unnatural, she parodically summons an archaic femininity that is immediately undercut by an organic disunity entirely antipathetic to the claims of essential identities flowing from natural bodies.

In a sense, this climactic scene registers an unnatural birth that becomes a bizarre wedding. So what conventionally functions as a wholly cultural ritual for organizing bodies and sexualities into institutionalized, and therefore naturalized, forms amenable to social reproduction achieves a contrary result here. As literary critic Susan Stewart tells us, in practice:

> The wedding as marriage ritual marks the transformation of the self from physical body to a network of social and property relations, from play to production, from circularity to linearity. Of all bourgeois rituals, it is the most significant, the most emblematic of class relations; and . . . the ritual most commonly chosen for exaggeration within the realm of the imaginary.[49]

49 Susan Stewart, *On Longing Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 117.

What, then, does the emphatically camp repetition and exaggeration of that ritual achieve here? If marriage initiates the bride and groom into the fixed exchange relations described by Stewart, *Bride of Frankenstein* confuses an otherwise straightforward process by producing too many brides and grooms. In addition to the sanctioned pair, Henry and Elizabeth, we are offered not only their parodic replication, the Monster and Bride, but a variety of alternative and queer couples. In a wedding dress that could double as a shroud, and to the strains of Franz Waxman's wedding march, the Bride takes her first tentative steps as an ecstatic Pretorius proclaims her 'the bride of Frankenstein'. His meaning is clear enough and identifies Henry rather than the Monster as her intended groom. More than once Pretorius himself is proposed as another potential bride for Henry: indeed, in surgical gown and with silver hair standing on end, he looks uncannily like their female creation.[50] Meanwhile, the narrative's notable equivocation on the timing of the Frankenstein marriage and its explicit lack of consummation holds Elizabeth and Henry at the transitional stage of the wedding. Far from activating the wedding ceremony as authorization and imposition of harmonious union on natural couples, in *Bride* the proliferation of brides and grooms – in the former case crossing gender lines – conspicuously stalls that outcome.

But it cannot halt it altogether. Indeed, the manufactured Bride's apparent preference for Henry brings to an abrupt end the Monster's hopes for a mate like himself and activates what the narrative until now has been at pains to frustrate: a naturalized masculinity defined exclusively within the bounds of patriarchal privilege and heterosexual obligation. The turning-point is signalled by the Bride's spine-chilling scream of fear and renunciation; in equal parts human,

50 Even Henry Frankenstein is explicitly identified with the Bride. At the very beginning of the film, for example, Henry is stretcher-bound and believed dead following the conflagration at the mill. When he finally stirs, Minnie screeches a variation of the famous incantation, 'He's alive!' Bringing the Bride to life repeats this configuration of imagery and declaration.

***Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935). Picture courtesy: BFI Stills.**

animal and technological wizardry, it is one of the most memorable in horror film history. Triggered first by the sight of her intended groom, the scream registers both refusal of the terms of homosocial exchange proposed by the wedding scenario and recognition of their inevitability. However, far from manifesting a collective dissent encompassing all those identified with the Bride through the trope of artificiality – and, moreover, potentially privileging the female characters of Mary Shelley, with whom she is doubled through the casting of Elsa Lanchester in both roles, and of Elizabeth, the most obvious alternative bride – her scream paradoxically heralds a problematic turn to an almost exclusive interest in the dilemma of masculinity. With the traumatic reinstallation of hegemonic norms, *Bride* presents masculine entanglement in heterosexual bonds as an absolute and murderous precondition to an assumption of patriarchal right redefined as self-destruction. Accordingly, Pretorius, positioned entirely in relation to the homoerotic, is consigned to oblivion; the Monster chooses death for both himself and the Bride; for Henry, survival means interment in dreary conjugality with the excruciatingly dull Elizabeth.

Whether grief or relief more accurately defines the mood of the last moments of the film as Henry and Elizabeth survey the wreckage of the laboratory from a safe distance, their fate should nevertheless be understood within the context of *Bride*'s intensely mordant commentary on what Judith Butler has identified as the culturally sanctioned 'annihilation of queers'.[51] If *Bride* furnishes the obligatory restitution of norms, it does so as it pointedly marks the exclusionary violence enforcing and giving preference to the authorized heterosexual pair and the performance of their conjugal contract. To the extent that reinstatement of this couple means the elimination of homoerotic desire and the banishment of fantastic forms of (re)production, it signals the triumph of the value of the natural and the identification of sexuality with legitimate and unimpeded (re)production. However, far from endorsing this operation, *Bride* represents the outcome as oppressive, uncertain and, as Butler suggests, always 'haunted' by the sexual possibilities and identities so annulled.[52]

And yet for all the virtuosity of its caustic assault on normative masculinity and the pathos of the film's ending, what is conspicuously lacking from *Bride of Frankenstein* is an equivalent suspicion of reified femininity in all of the guises it may adopt. In an important sense, Henry's reclamation by heterosexuality is invested with doubt and troubled by the more fascinating possibilities associated with the artificial Bride. Significantly, the same is not true for Elizabeth who, on the contrary, figures an unsatisfactory and permanent proxy for all that has been lost, and so embodies the measure of his fall. Indeed, two poles of femininity operate in *Bride*. In so far as the artificial femininity of the Bride crystallizes the

51 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 124. The consequent denaturalization – and thus, new insecurity – of the final heterosexual couple in this and other classic horror films has been noted by a number of critics, among them, Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 146 and Young, 'Here comes the bride', p. 316.

52 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 125.

positive dynamics of transformation available to those identified with her unnaturalness, Elizabeth personifies negative constraint and the concomitant regulation of sexuality and identity.[53] Moreover, the evacuation of normative femininity from the spectacular Bride, accomplished by overt attention to her constructedness, is achieved at the expense of its redoubled inscription in Elizabeth. Like those destroyed in the laboratory, Henry Frankenstein is recognized as a sacrificial victim to the demands of patriarchy in its conjugal form while Elizabeth, who has functioned as touchstone of normative, clinging femininity and sometimes as the butt of the film's camp humour, is installed as its uncomprehending beneficiary. In the end, *Bride*'s brilliant critique of masculinity is conservative because the various strategies it uses to valorize the artificial and unnatural – and thus summon the welcome eclipse of seamless and settled sex/gender identities flowing with assembly-line predictability from given anatomies – do not sufficiently extend to femininity. On the contrary, *Bride*'s critique relies on maintaining a naturalized femininity as a fixed point of comparison and foil.

53 This point is indebted to Biddy Martin's acute commentary on the tendency of some queer theory to posit a desirable and mobile antinormativity sustained by its opposition to a conveniently stabilized female body. Biddy Martin, *Femininity Played Straight: the Significance of Being Lesbian* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 71–2.

Both *42nd Street* and *Bride of Frankenstein* have as a central concern distressed male subjects whose panic is played out in relation to femininity conceived as a kind of machine assembled by them. Firmly located in the urban real of its contemporary moment, *42nd Street* tries to resolve Julian Marsh's crisis by projecting a commodified spectacle of feminine automation and anonymity against which his determining subjectivity can be read. It consolidates Marsh as producer by differentiating him from the serial and mechanized femininity of the chorines, aligned here with the perpetually metamorphosing ideal commodity of mass consumer culture, and by strategically designating his exhausted frailty as the mark of the 'human'. However, to the extent that the split-level structure of the backstage musical allows *42nd Street* to invest Marsh with naturalized masculine authority and singularity, it also candidly exposes the gendered terms and competing forces informing and ultimately limiting that attempt.

In contrast, *Bride* – even as it negotiates a complex set of responses to Depression-era ideologies of gender and sexual identities – is gleefully ahistorical as, through anachronism and parody, it conjures a resolutely faux and internally contradictory temporality that at every level emphasizes the inauthenticity of sources and subjects. Masculinity is disturbed here too, but Henry Frankenstein's predicament – registering as male hysteria mixed with lashings of camp humour – fuels a generative, anti-heterosexist frame that challenges as it exposes the violence underpinning the sex/gender binaries and norms which *42nd Street* seeks to naturalize. Far from employing the artificial feminine as a means of bolstering or

stabilizing masculine subjectivity, *Bride of Frankenstein* uses the charged figure of the Bride to counterpose a dream of expansion, loosening and transformation.

Yet in the end, each film leaves the male subject at an impasse and bound by very particular forms of insufficiency and failure – and, indeed, as debilitated by his contact with the artificial feminine. That *42nd Street* can eventually only produce Marsh as sacrificial and in austere solitude is made clear enough. Clearer still is the intimation that the attempted rescue comes too late and that Marsh, whether he knows it or not, has already been superseded by a machinery and future outside his control. And if *Bride*'s desire to break with normative subject positions is propelled by a stunning critique that potentially dismantles naturalized constructions of femininity and masculinity equally, it ultimately reneges on that promise. Finally, it is only against the anodyne fixity of Elizabeth and the prison of conjugality with which she is identified – and which the narrative conflates with patriarchy – that the fascinating perversity and unsettled masculinity which is allowed to oscillate around the Bride can be articulated.

A screen of one's own: early cinema in Québec and the public sphere 1906–28

SCOTT MacKENZIE

This essay seeks to address the relationship between national identity, the cinema, and the alternative public sphere in Québec between 1906 and 1928. I argue that the advent of early cinematic screening spaces allowed new discursive spaces to emerge which were intrinsically tied to developing moving picture culture. Such spaces allowed French-Canadian viewers to re-imagine themselves and their society. These alternative public spheres – which can be traced back to the beginnings of film in Québec – formed points of resistance to bourgeois publics and official culture. Although the emergent cinematic space in Québec was not explicitly defined in terms related to notions of publicness, the fact that the cinema could be seen as a potentially counterhegemonic public space within culture was not only demonstrated by the provincial government's and the Catholic Church's fear of the thematic content of films, but also in the concern these institutions had about the large publics which were formed through film screenings. Films were seen not only as 'entertainment' but as providing the means to enable audiences to re-imagine their community and their national identity.

The relationship between Church and State in Québec in the early twentieth century is worth examining. From the mid nineteenth century onward, the Catholic Church in Québec virtually co-managed the State with the elected governments of the time. The Church ran both the educational system, from primary schools to the universities, and the healthcare system.[1] Québec's political leaders, from the

1 See John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Québec*, second edition (Toronto: Copp, Clark Pitman, 1993), pp. 233–61.

Mayor of Montréal to the Premier of the Province, all wished to maintain positive relations with the Church because of the strength that the pulpit afforded members of the priesthood. Therefore, unlike the role played by the Church in the USA, in Québec the Church and State were quite inseparable when it came to laws that mandated the policing of the 'public good'. Both institutions used legalistic and discursive means in an attempt to limit the effects of urbanization and modernity in Québec in general, and Montréal in particular. If anything, the rise of a new, urbanized public sphere in Montréal came about through the radical juxtaposition of the traditional views of the Catholic Church (which quite explicitly recalled the Catholicism of pre-Revolutionary France) and the rise of modernity in the urbanized centres of North America. If, as Michel Foucault argues, power relations must be understood as a multiplicity of force relations that are variant, reversible and in conflict, and contain a variety of forms of resistance which ebb and flow within them,[2] we can begin to see how the cinema space itself became not only a contested space, but also a space of concurrent emancipation and repression. Indeed, the politics of space came to the forefront in the battle between modernity and religion in Québec in the 1900s to the 1920s.

The possibility of the cinema functioning as a counterhegemonic space within the public sphere was a primary concern of the Catholic Church in Québec from the 1900s to the 1930s. This concern originated because the cinema offered large groups of individuals a place to congregate outside the confines of the Church. The roots of this belief that the cinema was both emancipatory for the people and a perceived threat to the established order can be traced back to the advent of cinema in Québec in 1906 and to the first movie theatres of Léo-Ernest Ouimet. While many theorists have argued elsewhere that political and social action in Québécois cinema emerged with the advent of *cinéma direct* in the 1950s and the Challenge for Change/*Société nouvelle* programme in the 1960s, I shall argue here that these practices began much earlier and that the latent potential of an alternative public sphere has been at the heart of French Canadian and Québécois cinema since the *fin du siècle*.[3] As the cinema developed in Québec, the images on the screen quickly shifted from the presentation of the 'exotic' images of the Lumière brothers' travelogues to the presentation of locally shot actualities. Similar to the trajectory followed by the emergent cinema in other urban centres, this fostered a sense of community which was previously found – in the context of Québec – in either Churches or taverns.[4] The cinema, in a relatively short period of time, became a place to gather, debate and discuss images and experiences.[5] For these and other reasons I shall discuss, early film in Québec offered its audiences a place to negotiate their national (if not nationalist) identity, to re-imagine their history, and to envision an egalitarian

2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: an Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1980), pp. 92–102.

3 For overviews of the Challenge for Change/*Société nouvelle* programmes, see Ron Burnett, 'Video/film: from communication to community', in Nancy Thede and Alain Ambrosi (eds), *Video the Changing World* (Montréal: Black Rose, 1991), pp. 54–60; Janine Marchessault, 'Reflections of the dispossessed: video and the "Challenge for Change" experiment', *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1995), pp. 131–46; and Scott MacKenzie, 'Société nouvelle: the Challenge for Change in the alternative public sphere', *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1996), pp. 67–84.

4 The cinema also offered a space which was not defined by gender-exclusion, as was the men-only tavern in Québec. The exclusion of women from taverns was legislated by the provincial government, and the law remained in force until 1979. See Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Québec*, p. 255.

5 Similar practices have been documented by Miriam Hansen in her study of American silent cinema, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

future, even if these practices can only be understood as the postulation of utopian ideals, created through a dialectic between the repressive Church and State and the development of 'leisure time' on the part of urbanized working classes. Because of these factors, of interest here are both the discursive practices and legalistic issues surrounding the cinematic text and the extra-diegetic film culture in Québec at this time: the interpretations, appropriations, contextualizations and contestations that aid us in understanding the larger role played by cinema in Québec culture and its relation to the institutional discourses of Church and State.

Léo-Ernest Ouimet and the Ouimetoscope

The *cinématographe* came to Montréal six months after the Lumière brothers premiered their invention in Paris. On 27 June 1896, at the *café-concert* Le Palace at 78 rue Saint-Laurent, Louis Minier and his assistant Louis Pupier presented the Lumière brother's *cinématographe*; this was the first film screening in Canada and the first North American screening of the Lumière brothers' invention.[6] The event was primarily for dignitaries, journalists and the Mayor of Montréal. From the descriptions found in the Montréal daily *La Presse* on 29 June 1896, it is apparent that *L'arrivé d'un train* (France, 1895) was screened, as were *Démolition d'un mur* (France, 1895), *Partie écarté* (France, 1895) and *Baignade de mer* (France, 1896), among others. According to some accounts, Léo-Ernest Ouimet was one of the spectators present at this screening.[7] While there is some doubt as to whether he was actually in the audience, there is no doubt that Ouimet was interested in moving pictures soon after their arrival in Montréal. The son of a farmer, Ouimet was born in St-Martin, Laval, Québec, on 16 March 1877. He was a young electrician working at the Théâtre Nationale when he began attending film screenings at Parc Sohmer, an amusement park near the port of Old Montréal. In 1902, the proprietors of Parc Sohmer – Joe Lajoie and Ernest Lavigne – decided to screen films on Sundays. It was here that Ouimet first learned how to use Edison's kinetoscope; he was trained by Edison projectionist Bert Fenton. Ouimet was able to attend these early screenings because provincial by-laws required, in deference to the Catholic Church, that theatres such as the one he worked at were closed on Sundays.

By 1903 Fenton was facing problems with Canadian customs officials. He was told that he could no longer bring films across the border to project himself; instead, he was to send the films via express mail, so that import taxes could be collected. In light of this development, Fenton asked Ouimet to receive the films and project them for him.[8] When Georges Gauvreau, the owner of the Théâtre Nationale, decided to add films to his bill, it was again Ouimet who

6 Germain Lacasse, *'Histoires de scopes: le cinéma muet au Québec* (Montréal: Cinémathèque québéçoise, 1988), p. 5; Lacasse 'Cultural amnesia and the birth of film in Canada', *Cinema Canada*, no. 108 (1984), pp. 6–7.

7 See Léon-H. Bélanger, *Les Ouimetoscopes: Léo-Ernest Ouimet et les débuts du cinéma québécois* (Montréal: VLB Editeur, 1978), p. 18; and Hye Bossin, 'The story of L. Ernest Ouimet, film pioneer', in Hye Bossin (ed.), *Canadian Film Weekly 1952–53 Yearbook of the Canadian Motion Picture Industry* (Toronto: Film Publications of Canada, 1953), pp. 28–9.

8 Arthur Larente, 'The beginning of the moving pictures in Montréal as narrated by pioneer L. Ernest Ouimet to Arthur Larente', unpublished MS, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1964.

was asked to project them. Here, Ouimet's entrepreneurial skills became apparent. At the beginning of each projection, Ouimet flashed his name on the screen through a stereopticon. This self-promotion quickly made Ouimet's name as synonymous with the cinema in Montréal as Edison's was in the USA and the Lumières' were in Paris.

As the popularity of the cinema grew, Ouimet realized that it could become one of the key technological revolutions of the century and, hence, highly profitable. In 1904 he did publicity work for the Tarte brothers of the newspaper *La Patrie*, by projecting films on a screen attached to their building, which was under construction at the time.[9] Also in 1904, he acquired the franchise for Walters' Kinetograph Company of New York, bought two Edison projectors, and worked as a travelling projectionist, exhibiting films in and around Montréal. By 1905 this venture had become so successful that Ouimet opened the Ouimet Film Exchange, the first film exchange in Canada.[10]

While Ouimet was successful as a travelling projectionist, there was greater profit to be found in the burgeoning store-front *graphes* – the term derived from *cinématographe* – similar in format to the American nickelodeons. With fifty dollars – all his available capital – Ouimet was able, on 1 January 1906, to open his first Ouimetoscope in the Salle Poiré, by the Klondike Bar located on rue Ste-Catherine. This first Ouimetoscope could accommodate approximately six hundred people and was in the style of the nickelodeons of the time. The admission price ranged from ten cents for matinees, fifteen cents for evening screenings and twenty-five cents for reserved seating. At first Ouimet screened Pathé films, actualities from Europe and America, and Edison products, along with the only available francophone material in Montréal, *chansons illustrés*, silent films which illustrated popular French songs, allowing audiences, and usually a *chansonnier*, to sing along.[11] The range of his selection, however, quickly increased. By February Ouimet was screening 'colour films'; by July along with his Pathé product, he was showing Selig, Kamen, Biograph and Méliès films; and by November he was shooting his own actualities.[12]

By the summer of 1907, Ouimet had generated enough capital to renovate the Ouimetoscope. Faced with competition from Gauvreau – who opened the Nationoscope at the corner of rue Ste-Catherine and rue St-André in 1907, after failing to buy Salle Poiré – Ouimet bought the property for $70,000 and the liquor licence for $30,000 more. He then razed the Ouimetoscope over the summer – traditionally a period when theatres closed because of the heat, as there was no air conditioning. He then invested $50,000 more to rebuild, and opened the new, improved Ouimetoscope on 31 August 1907.[13]

This new Ouimetoscope, along with the Nationoscope, were the

9 Ibid., p. 2.

10 British and Colonial Press Limited, 'Advance press service of L.E. Ouimet' (Toronto: British and Colonial Press Limited, 1918), pp. 2–3.

11 See Germain Lacasse, 'Du bonimenteur québécois comme practique résistante', *Iris*, no. 22 (1996), pp. 53–66.

12 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, pp. 78–9.

13 Bossin, *Canadian Film Weekly*, p. 36.

first movie palaces in North America, seating 1,200 and 1,100 people respectively (the next comparable palace was The Strand, which opened in New York in 1915).[14] Ouimet was not only trying to compete successfully in the burgeoning *scope* market; for a number of reasons he was also trying to attract a middle-class, bourgeois audience. To this end, he attempted to modify the class composition of his clientele not only through a change in emphasis in the programming, but through decor and the press. He also changed the emphasis of his programmes: the nickelodeon format was replaced with two two-and-a-half hour shows a day. His top admission price went up to fifty cents. He also emphasized the 'refined' nature of his programmes: on the opening night of the renovated Ouimetoscope, Ouimet screened an actuality which was appropriately 'cultured': *Marriage du roi d'Espagne* (France, 1905).[15] The announcement of the grand opening in *La Presse* on 31 August 1907 also mentions the 'superb spectacle' of the Victoria Falls in Africa.[16] As Germain Lacasse notes, Ouimet wished to 'draw to the cinema the bourgeois client, who paid more and frequented the theatre'. This was the policy that Ouimet gradually established,[17] initiating a process of gentrification which is also readily apparent in the comments describing the decor of the new Ouimetoscope. An article in *La Presse* – probably a press release written by Ouimet himself – goes into great detail about the marble floors, the ceramic patterns in the walls, the framed screen and the smoking room. Finally, the article mentions the appearance of 'aristocrats' at the Ouimetoscope, a concept which was totally foreign in Québec.[18]

14 For more on the battles between the Ouimetoscope and the Nationoscope, see Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan and André Gaudreault, 'Quand la Nationoscope dama le pion au Ouimetoscope', in André Gaudreault, Germain Lacasse and Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan, *Au Pays des ennemis du cinéma . . . : Pour une nouvelle histoire des débuts du cinéma au Québec* (Montréal: Nuit blanche éditeur, 1996), pp. 163–74.

15 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 17.

16 'Le Ouimetoscope: ouverture de la nouvelle salle aujourd'hui', *La Presse*, 31 August 1907.

17 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 19.

18 *La Presse*, 31 August 1907.

The Ouimetoscope and the public sphere

Miriam Hansen's groundbreaking work on the silent cinema as an alternative public sphere is of some relevance in the examination of the role played by the Ouimetoscope in the Montréal social horizon. Hansen's use of the term 'public' denotes 'a discursive matrix or process through which social experience is articulated, interpreted, negotiated and contested in an intersubjective, potentially collective and oppositional form'.[19] Hansen, drawing on the work of Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, argues that American silent cinema offers a horizon on which an emergent new public sphere can be hypothesized; one which is, in its conceptualization, proletarian in nature, unlike the bourgeois public sphere posited by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.[20]

Negt's and Kluge's conceptualization of the proletarian public sphere is not an autonomous part of the social horizon; instead, it is constituted at the intersection of the decaying bourgeois public sphere and the market economy of twentieth-century capitalism. The term 'proletarian', in this instance, goes beyond a simple working-class

19 Miriam Hansen, 'Early cinema, late cinema: permutations of the public sphere', *Screen*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1993), p. 201.

20 Miriam Hansen, 'Early cinema: whose public sphere?', in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), pp. 228–46.

orientation; instead, it embraces the position of marginality that is inevitably constructed by dominant forces:

> Even if there were nothing in the history and living situation of the working class that corresponded to a proletarian public sphere, Negt/Kluge argue this category would have to be – and could be – developed in its negative determination: on the basis of hegemonic efforts to suppress, repress, destroy, isolate, split or assimilate any formation of potential proletarian public sphere and to approximate its material substance, experience, in the interest of private profit-maximization.[21]

21 Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 232.

In the context of American silent film, Hansen sees the attempt to consolidate a middle-class audience in the shift from the diversity of early cinema styles to the dominant style of Classical Hollywood cinema. She further claims that this transformation of the movie house from a working-class to a middle-class social space is not as linear a trajectory as many film historians have argued. In lieu of a Rankean model of historical progression, Hansen contends that the history of film spectatorship should be looked upon from a different angle:

> Rather than emphasize historical parallels in the cinema's integration into the dominant public sphere, one might consider the potential of the gap created by a historically changed constellation, i.e. the possibility that early silent cinema – *because* of and *counter* to its commercial orientation – may have contained elements of a public sphere radically different in kind.[22]

22 Ibid., pp. 231–2.

The need to regulate and negate, then, is not simply the act of a censor; it is an attempt to appropriate emergent, and possibly contestatory, spaces on the social horizon and subsume them under the dominant spheres of power and influence. In doing so, however, what is new and perhaps radical about the space gains strength through its negation, as negation only serves further to define its boundaries and power. Even if the new public space is not, in the first instance, used as a place of critique, the attempts at assimilation or negation will necessarily place it in this position. While this process of negation may create new spaces for democratic possibilities to emerge as an ideal, it was not the articulated desire of movie theatre owners and managers that these ideals develop.

Hansen contends that the last thing on the minds of movie theatre owners was the creation of democratic public spaces in which the working class, immigrants and the bourgeoisie could gather.[23] This certainly applies to Ouimet who, more than any of his competitors, wished to attract a bourgeois, affluent clientele and, if possible, transform his movie palace into a legitimate theatre. Indeed, his drive for a bourgeois audience led him into direct competition with the local theatres, especially with the Théâtre Nationale, whose clients frequented middle-class theatres and not working-class nickelodeons.[24]

23 Ibid., pp. 60–65.

24 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 19.

Nevertheless, through the 1910s the main audience of the *scopes* remained working class. As Dane Lanken points out, 'the two main movie house streets in Montréal were Notre-Dame and St-Laurent, both in solidly working-class areas, the latter long the starting point in the city for immigrants'.[25] Despite his attempt to change the social class of his audience, Ouimet must have realized who filled the seats in his theatre, especially on Sunday. As time progressed, however, the audience did become more heterogeneous, even when Ouimet abandoned the 'prestige format', which was an obvious attempt to replicate the middle-class milieu of the theatre, and returned to 'grind house' screenings of the nickelodeons. Indeed, one of the key ways to understand the diversity of Ouimet's audience is to consider the location of his theatre, and indeed, that of the other *scopes*: all were in the heart of the city, where English and French, working and middle class came together. The crowds, therefore, that gathered at the Ouimetoscope were diverse in terms of both their class backgrounds and their mother tongues, and in turn-of-the-century Montréal this in itself was a new phenomenon. And while it is impossible to empirically reconstruct who composed Ouimet's 'real' audience, it is interesting to map out the kinds of tensions that surrounded the nature of the cinema's audience at the time.

Through the creation of this new space where different classes could mingle outside the confines of the Church, the Ouimetoscope became a highly contested space in Montréal, fought over, celebrated, derided and denounced by the State, the clergy, the press and the people. In the context of French Canadian cultural life in the early twentieth century, the Ouimetoscope, and the numerous 'scopes' which followed, offered the possibility of creating a space outside the dominant social horizon of the State, the family and, most profoundly in Québec, the Catholic Church. Part of this has to do with the existence of the space itself, but there was more to it than that. Parks, for instance, had existed for years without the need for them to be unduly regulated or closed down, mainly because there was no reason – short of strikes and protests, which were quickly suppressed – to gather there in an organized fashion.

The creation of this new space arose from a variety of factors. The working classes only had one day off a week, which was Sunday. Historically, on this one day of rest, families attended Church and spent time within the private spheres of culture. Most forms of entertainment were closed on Sundays, and other forms of entertainment during the week were prohibitively expensive. The cinema, open on Sunday, not only provided an alternative to the Church, which was often sought after in urban centres, but also provided a form of entertainment that was, for the most part, completely 'foreign' (unlike the theatre, which was at least performed in French).

The factor which brought about anxiety and debate in the

25 Dane Lanken, *Montréal Movie Palaces: Great Theatres of the Golden Era 1884–1938* (Waterloo: Penumbra Press, 1993), p. 11.

dominant sphere was nevertheless linked to the nature of the attraction itself – the images on the screen – and the fact that the projection took place in a public, unregulated space. It was not only the specifics of a given film that bothered the State and the clergy, but the possibility that anything could appear on the screen and that there was no way to control the contingent actions and debates of the audiences. During the silent period, as Hansen points out, 'films were viewed differently, and were likely to have a wide range of meanings, depending on the neighbourhood and the status of the theatre, on the ethnic and racial background of the habitual audience, on the mixture of gender and generation, on the ambition and skills of the exhibitor and the performing personnel'.[26] Further, as both Hansen and Tom Gunning have pointed out, the structure of the films themselves was not as rigid as it became with the advent of Classical Hollywood cinema. Early cinema was characterized by the power to astonish over the ability to narrate; by its greater intertextuality; by the alteration of live shows with films; and by the potential for the film to be commented on through the use of music, sound effects or an onstage narrator.[27] The cinema seemed to provide the social function once provided by the Church, but without the rigid control, and audiences of early cinema interacted both with the film and with each other. At the very least, this was how the Church perceived things to be. These claims as to the interactive nature of film spectatorship hold true in the context of the Ouimetoscope, and this interactivity developed even further once images of Québec made it to the screen.

26 Hansen, 'Early cinema, late cinema', p. 209.

27 See Tom Gunning, 'The cinema of attractions: early film, its spectator and the avant-garde', in Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema*, pp. 56–62.

The emergence of 'local' cinema

While films had already been shot in Montréal by Americans and shown at the Ouimetoscope and other local theatres since the turn of the century, these films were scenics, shot because of the 'exotic' nature of snow and skating. Key examples which are still extant include: *Skating: Montréal* (Anon., 1898); *Duke of York in Montréal* (Edison, 1901); *Montréal Fire Department on Runners* (Edison, 1901); *After the First Snow* (American Mutoscope & Biograph, 1903); and *Logging in Québec* (Anon., 1903). André Gaudreault and Germain Lacasse contend that the films made by Edison, American Mutoscope, and others planted seeds leading to: 'the development of a "local", if not "national", cinema. . . . Montréalers were not content for very long seeing their city as "scenics" shot by outsiders. They also wished to see their city as they defined it.'[28]

In order to attract both the working and middle classes, one of the promises made by Ouimet when he re-opened the Ouimetoscope was to present actualities of Montréal which he himself would shoot. He had begun this practice during the run of the first Ouimetoscope in

28 André Gaudreault and Germain Lacasse, 'Montréal cinématographié au début du siècle (première période: 1895–1906)', in Gaudreault et al., *Au Pays des ennemis du cinéma*, p. 61.

1906, and increased his rate of production with the advent of the new Ouimetoscope. These actualities were immediately popular, as they reflected the main passions and concerns of the Québécois working and bourgeois classes of the time. In this regard, Ouimet was a pioneer. As Hye Bossin notes: 'Ouimet made his own Canadian newsreels a year before Pathé came on the scene with the first on the continent in 1909'.[29] At the time Bossin was writing, it was believed that Ouimet began film production in 1908; it is now clear that Ouimet was producing actualities a full three years before Pathé's arrival in 1909. One of the key reasons for the early popularity of Ouimet's films was that there was no local competition of any significance. Furthermore, because of his penchant for self-promotion, Ouimet was a local celebrity and his films were therefore viewed as local, and consequently more authentic. Authenticity, of course, is a thorny issue, but the belief on the part of the public that locally produced actualities were more 'real' certainly held sway both in Montréal and in other urban centres during the course of early cinema.

29 Hye Bossin, 'They led the way: the motion picture industry in Canada marks the golden anniversary of the silver screen', in Bossin (ed.), *Canadian Film Weekly 1953–54*, p. 23.

One of earliest films shot by Ouimet himself, *Mes espérances* (Québec, 1908), superficially recalls Auguste and Louis Lumière's *Déjeuner de bébé* (France, 1895), as it is a film which features Ouimet's children. However, the film quickly foregrounds the tension between documentary and fiction film. At first the film is a straightforward portrait of Ouimet's children as they play with a phonograph; in the second series of shots, though, one sees the little boy reading the newspaper as if after a hard day's work, while the little girl takes care of the 'feminine' chores such as child rearing, represented by her playing with a doll. The film quickly moves from documenting Ouimet's children to his staged fantasy of their future roles in culture.

In essence, *Mes espérances* resembles the latter-day image-making practices undertaken when one first acquires a Super-8 camera, or a camcorder: a document of one's immediate, private-sphere surroundings. Quickly, though, Ouimet and his cameraperson Lactance Giroux moved on to shooting actualities of fires, bridges and public events in Montréal. Ouimet's films, which are not included in most English-language histories of Canadian and Québécois cinema – or, at best, are mentioned in a cursory fashion – offer one of the earliest examples of the secular documentation and mediation of Québécois identity. As Gaudreault and Lacasse write: 'these productions represent the first significant effort to constitute a local – which at times took on the aim of being a national – production'.[30] These films were tied intrinsically to notions of local identity. And while the films at times represented national concerns, it would be premature to discuss them in terms of nationalism, as the nationalist discourses of the time were the highly conservative if not reactionary ones of Henri Bourassa and Lionel Groulx, who were

30 Gaudreault and Lacasse, 'Montréal cinématographié au début du siècle', p. 62.

concerned with the purity of the French language and the unquestioned authority of the Church. The secular, popular imaginary of what it was to be Québécois in a modern, urban context was a quite different form of national identity and identification. Indeed, the cinema was one of the means through which the French language and the Church were supposedly being usurped.

Ouimet's films reflected and reported on the world in which the spectators lived. As Ouimet and his camerapersons developed their skills, they would film fires, disasters and parades which took place in the Montréal area – and, less frequently, in other parts of Québec – and have a one-to-three-day turnover from event to projection. Spectators could then see the events that recently took place, and also, in the case of parades and festivities, go and see if they appeared in the image. This process meant that the Ouimetoscope, in a relatively short period of time, provided a space wherein the public could come and re-experience communally recent events.

On 17 November 1906, Ouimet and Giroux filmed a foot race at Carré Saint-Louis, a popular event at the time. The following Monday, 19 November, the film was playing at the Ouimetoscope.[31] This was successful, so Ouimet followed it up on 3 and 4 December by driving to fires and filming them, and then projecting the films in his theatre. The day after Ouimet filmed the first fire, *La Presse* covered Ouimet's filming, which necessarily built up anticipation for the filmed version of the event. By May 1907, the Ouimetoscope was screening a film shot by Giroux and Ouimet on snowshoe races in Montréal, another attempt to draw the local audience to the *scope* by evoking local practices and events. Ouimet's films, then, in a fairly short period went from simple actualities to films which were representative of the key events of the day. This practice culminated with the *course de sacs de sel*, organized by *La Presse* on 31 October 1907. Contestants in this race had to run with a hundred kilogram bag of salt on their back. A popular sport at the time, the press built up the event over the preceding month. Furthermore, as Lacasse writes: 'Every stripe of politician publicized the event as a nationalistic and patriotic demonstration'.[32] According to newspaper accounts – admittedly biased as they organized the event – over 300,000 spectators turned out. Within the week, *Le concours de sac de sel* (Québec, 1907) was playing in the Ouimetoscope. The film played for two weeks, a very long run at the time, as only the annual presentation of *La Passion* had anywhere near as long an engagement.[33] *Le concours de sac de sel* is a turning point in the development of French-Canadian and Québécois cinema, as the circular relationship between profilmic event, filmic event and audience that was to become a key part in both the theory and practice of Québécois cinema was already present at this early stage. Films such as *Congrès eucharistique* (1910) reinforced this novelty of the 'quick-turnover' into practice.

31 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 17.

32 Ibid., p. 20.

33 Passion Play films were not only successful in Montréal, but throughout the USA as well, which makes it difficult to determine exactly which version of the play was screened in Montréal. For more on the Passion Play and early cinema, see Charles Musser, 'Passions and the Passion Play: theatre, film and religion in America, 1880–1900', *Film History*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1993), pp. 419–56.

Film also began to play a role in the political sphere. During the federal elections of 1908, a great deal of interest was generated in Québec about the outcome of the vote, as the Liberal candidate, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, was a native of Québec. Ouimet had made a film earlier in the year entitled *Wilfrid Laurier: l'assemblé de Laprairie* (Québec, 1908). As Laurier passed by the Ouimetoscope during a campaign parade, Ouimet projected the film on the building across the street from the theatre. The film was used again on the election night of 26 October 1908. *La Presse* projected the election results, riding by riding, onto the facade of a building on rue St-Jacques. Once Laurier was declared the winner, *Wilfrid Laurier: l'assemblé de Laprairie* was projected for the ecstatic crowd by Ouimet.[34]

34 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 27.

All these examples point to the fact that the cinema played a highly charged role in Montréal during the early twentieth century. If one is to conceptualize the Ouimetoscope and Ouimet's films as the formation of a new or alternative public sphere, one is faced with a very different scenario from the one theorized by Hansen in the American context, but one just as filled with possibilities. The *scope*, in the Québécois context, did not offer the viewer the same kind of space which Hansen contends *The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight* (US, 1897) offered women in New York. To be more precise, the contested space which surrounded the *scopes* offered publics more than spectatorial pleasures that could be understood through dominant and alternative readings of the images on the screen. Instead, films like *Le concours de sac de sel* offered the viewers images of themselves, projected back into a public space. Audiences were not going to see a film to find out what happened at a given event, as they were most probably present at the event itself. Instead this public space for the first time put 'the people'– an ill-defined but intuitive concept – on the screen and offered the working and middle classes a place to congregate, speak and share a communal experience outside of the institutionalized hierarchies of the workplace and the Church. In sharing this communal experience, working-class audiences had the chance to imagine themselves as part of a community separate from both Church and State. And even this space did not arise, in the first instance, from the audiences themselves, it came into formation once the combined forces of the Church and State, through both discursive and legislative practices, attempted to control the space. Through negation, then, the images and the space itself became contested sites.

Michael Warner suggests that the advent of mass audiences, such as the one found at the Ouimetoscope, brings about a different relationship between the reader/viewer and the text, be it written or visual.[35] This position is one of imagining the self not just as an individual consuming a public text, but also one where the individual imagines a larger public of which she is a member. The imagining of a social and public horizon is as important as the comprehension of

35 Michael Warner, 'The mass public and the mass subject', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 377–401.

the information in the text, and this imagined horizon frames the responses one has to texts within the public sphere. The ability to imagine a community in such a way is magnified by the cinema: as one watches a film within a public space, the imagined audience and the real audience blur, accentuating the feeling of, in Benedict Anderson's much-used phrase, an imagined community. In the history of the cinema, this notion of community is manifested in many diverse instances, both through the efforts of film producers and film audiences. In the case of early Québécois cinema, this experience typically took place on Sunday, the one day the workers had off, a time typically relegated to a very different kind of congregating and social imagining: that of Church-going.

The negation of cinematic space

Despite his financial success and his attempt to legitimize the *scopes* by appealing to the middle classes, the two forces which would plague Ouimet throughout his cinematic career first appeared on the horizon in 1907: the attempt of US companies to control distribution, and the goal of the Catholic Church in Québec to close movie theatres on Sundays. In September 1907, Ouimet was invited to attend the meeting of the United Film Service Protective Association and the Film Importers and Manufacturers of the United States in Chicago; he was the only Canadian to attend. As Hye Bossin notes, this meeting was the prelude to the Trust initiated by Edison in order to secure and protect his copyrights through protectionism and the monopolization of performance, production and distribution. While Ouimet was informed at this meeting that, as a Canadian distributor, he would be exempt from the requirements of the Trust, the pressure from American distributors never relented and their protectionist methods – along with the omnipresent rhetoric of the Church – eventually forced Ouimet out of film distribution in 1922.[36]

Ironically, the one fear shared by both Ouimet and the Catholic Church was the threat of US interventionism in the Québec film industry. This situation was paradoxical, as the exact films that the Americans made increasingly difficult for Ouimet to distribute were the same ones that the Church wished to keep out of Québec. But while the Church eventually became extremely critical of the content of American films, the debate about the cinema began over something entirely different: the question of Sunday closings. It was in December 1907 that the Catholic Church began to take note of the cinema in Québec. Theatres, concerts, horse races and sport competitions had been long closed on Sundays, but *scopes* and nickelodeons had been able to remain open by finding loopholes in the law: for instance, Ouimet sold candy at the Ouimetoscope. With each candy-bar sold on Sunday, the purchaser could enter the theatre

36 Bélanger, *Les Ouimetoscopes*, pp. 110–13.

for free. In the face of these actions, the archbishop of Montréal, Paul Bruchési, lead the crusade to keep movie theatres closed on Sundays, claiming that the cinema had questionable moral values. Ouimet and other movie theatre owners resisted the edict of the Church, as they drew their largest audiences on Sundays.

The power of film had swept Montréal incredibly quickly. Ouimet's press and publicity aside, it was the working classes of the East end of Montréal that went to the burgeoning *scopes* most frequently, especially as venues opened in the working-class East End of the city. Furthermore, the support felt for the cinema by the public was immense: when the Government of Canada introduced the 'Sunday observance' law on 13 July 1906 – adopted as law on 1 March 1907 – which would effectively close the *scopes* on the one day the working classes had off, more than 10,000 people turned out to protest against the law at Champ-de-Mars.[37] This lead to a legal challenge by Ouimet which was referred to the Supreme Court of Canada (in 1912 Ouimet won his case; as many of his co-litigants had gone bankrupt, Ouimet had to pay the entire legal bill).[38]

Throughout 1907, the attacks on the *scopes*, particularly from the Catholic Church, increased dramatically. Because of his public renown, Ouimet was targeted for arrest and charged with opening illegally on Sunday on 1 December 1907. The battle with Ouimet was not solely over his actions, but also over what he represented and this led to his problems with the clergy. As Lacasse points out:

> In rural and Catholic Québec, it was preached that the 'salvation of our race' (*salut de notre race*) resides in a profound attachment to the past, to values that the evolution of the world leaves further behind every day. Without a doubt, it took an upstart (*parvenu*) like Ouimet to take the step to liberate himself from the reactionary and semi-feudal ideology that dominated the French Canadian bourgeoisie and to dare to face down the restraints that the reactionaries were imposing everywhere.[39]

It is important to stress that, at this time, the threat posed by the cinema was not based on the content of the images themselves, but on their popularity and the massive publics that this popularity created, as evidenced by the protest of 1906. This popularity was seen as being in direct competition with the authority of the Church to disseminate information to the public: to use Kantian terminology, it was an attack on tutelage. This attack on the new public space of the cinema, however, quickly turned into an attack on the moral lessons of the films themselves, and this attack was lead again by members of the Catholic Church. While the films screened by Ouimet helped build an alternative public sphere, a space outside of those of Church and State, they did not promote a strong sense of nationalism. The Church, in fact, saw the cinema as an attack on the lifestyle and history of Québec.

37 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 17.

38 Larente, 'The beginning of moving pictures', p. 4. Larente also claims Henri Bourassa intervened on behalf of the theatre owners in their negotiations with the Canadian government. See National Archives of Canada. Visual and Sound Archives. Oral History. Interview with Arthur Larente (on cassette). Interviewer: Bill Galloway. Accession no. 1972–0012.

39 Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, p. 29.

It is important to stress in any discussion of the emergence of Québécois cinema as a potential site of an alternative public sphere that one is not solely advancing an abstract, theoretical proposition. In much the same way as the development of cinema technology had an effect on the kinds of films which could be produced in Québec and Canada, the discourses of the Church and State attempted to frame the kinds of films that could be distributed and to limit the cinema's role in constructing a national imaginary. If one takes to heart Negt's and Kluge's argument that negation is a means by which an oppositional site may be constructed, then the cinema in Québec can be seen as a site that has been negotiated, shaped and contested by the Church, the State, the forces of capital and various publics. And while, *pace* Foucault, the discursive and legalistic systems of power which structured the space of the cinema were both diverse and dispersed, the process of negation was nevertheless a key determining factor in the kinds of discourses which surrounded the cinema in Québec. This kind of negation is nowhere more apparent than in the actions of the Catholic Church from the 1900s to the 1920s.

The Catholic Church, especially the young, activist clergy, opposed the cinema and, indeed, most forms of popular communication as the tools of Americans, English Canadians and Jews, all of whom wished to obliterate the culture, history and traditions of the Québécois through the dissemination of prurient texts. The power of the Catholic Church in Québec was based upon maintaining a 'traditional' culture that took the symbols of Christianity as unmediated representations of the power and glory of God. The Church postulated that the culture of Québec ought to be composed of individuals who were religious, devout, self-sacrificing, mostly rural and latently nationalistic. As mass media developed in North America, a fervent feeling that new communication technologies, exposing the populace to ideas in opposition to those of the Church, would erode both the French language and the power and authority of the clergy. The most apparent manifestation of this erosion is illustrated by the fact that in 1912, the Supreme Court of Canada finally ruled that movie theatres could remain open on Sundays. This enraged the Catholic Church, which then campaigned for total closure of the cinema in Québec, as they argued that the cinema was ruining the souls of the population. In response, Québec's first film censorship laws were passed on 21 December 1912.[40]

These debates grew with the advent of sound in 1928 which, in the eyes of the Church, forever determined the 'nationality' of a film through language. Father Lionel Groulx, Professor of History at the Université de Montréal, was one of the key figures to argue vehemently that French Canada had to be seen as a uniform collectivity and not as a collection of individuals existing in a culturally diverse community. Furthermore, Groulx claimed that the

40 André Gaudreault and Germain Lacasse, 'La naissance de la censure au "pays des ennemis du cinéma"', in Gaudreault, et al., *Au Pays des ennemis du cinéma*, p. 105.

French-Canadian collectivity was being attacked from all sides: that anyone outside it wished to 'contaminate' it with ideas and ideals that were 'foreign' to the Catholic way of life. For Groulx, one of the key examples of this 'contamination' was the cinema: its American ideology of secular life and loose morals was anathema to Catholicism. While the cinema was a convenient scapegoat, it is apparent that the cinema was only a symptom of larger changes taking place in Québécois culture. The Church was aggressively attempting to reaffirm a collective identity; one which could maintain the clergy's spiritual and economic control over a populace that, through urbanization, was slowly moving towards a secular existence.

The priests and writers associated with the journal *L'Action française* were the most vocal about the evils of the cinema.[41] Founded in 1917 as an off-shoot of the Catholic, proto-nationalist group *Ligue des Droits du français*, *L'Action française* was edited by Groulx. In a speech at the *Monument National* in 1918, Groulx proclaimed that the cinema was eroding the traditional culture of French Canada and referred to the cinema as an 'agent of denationalization.'[42] In Groulx's view, what was ailing the French-Canadian society was the influx of Anglo-American (read: Jewish) culture. This influx lead to a loss of a sense of one's own cultural history, language and identity. This collective identity, which was inextricably linked to the Catholic Church, had to be preserved in the face of the immorality of the mass media. It is important to note that discourses of anti-Semitism were in the minority in Québec in the 1920s. Nevertheless, the voices of anti-Semitism came from some of the most respected corners of French-Canadian society: the nationalist daily *Le Devoir* (founded by Henri Bourassa) and *L'Action française*. Both Groulx's historical writings and his works of fiction reflect the desire for a racially pure, ahistorical French-Canadian race.

In 1924, the attack on the cinema by Groulx and others made it to the pages of *L'Action française*, which was an influential and highly circulated magazine in Québec. The magazine was very much the voice of the Catholic Church, especially for middle-class francophones; its publisher was the most austere of the francophone dailies, *Le Devoir*. Anti-anglophone, anti-American, and incredibly anti-Semitic, the first ten years of *L'Action française*, under the general directorship of Groulx, found villains and scapegoats lurking around every corner. These villains were constructed in order to preserve the racial and cultural purity of the French-Canadian collectivity and to reassert the power and authority of the Church. As the cinema was seen to be beginning to eclipse the Church's place in the popular imaginary, it needed to be vilified. And the most expedient way to vilify the cinema was to create a 'counter-imaginary' by launching an attack against the 'Jewish conspiracy' to rule the world through the cinema.

41 The history of the politics behind *L'Action française* can be found in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action française: French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties* (Toronto: Viking, 1992), pp. 78–97.

42 Father Lionel Groulx cited in, 'Mot d'ordre: contre cinéma', *L'Action française* 12 (July 1924), p. 3.

In an essay entitled 'L'ennemi dans la place: théâtre et cinéma', Harry Bernard – who wrote the piece at the behest of Groulx – finds the faults of the cinema to lie in a 'Jewish conspiracy' to take over the world and destroy Christianity: 'The films they show us are, with rare exception, of American, or more precisely, Judeo-American, provenance'.[43] Bernard offers statistics to 'demonstrate' that Jews control eighty-five per cent of the American film industry – a figure which includes the works of 'the Jew Charlie Chaplin'. He then goes on to 'expose' the goals of the Hollywood Jews:

> The Jews, with their goal of dechristianization, have as their principle goal, to make money and to get their hands on the world's finances. To arrive at their goals nothing is negligible or too low. They exploit passion in all their forms and flatter the instincts. They have no anxiety about morals or order and the marvellous means of education offered by the cinema becomes in their hands, because of their love of gold and their quest for domination, a tool of depravity, a school of corruption and revolution.[44]

According to Bernard, the Jews were not satisfied with simply accumulating wealth; this was solely 'a means of arriving at their goal which is the domination of the civilized world'.[45] This propagandistic conspiracy was effective upon French Canada precisely because its culture and history had been obliterated through colonialization: it no longer had a collective imaginary in which to invest. The cinema, then, offered the people a comfortable imaginary which came from outside the morals and traditions of the collectivity: 'For the people, the cinema is some sort of conscious dream'.[46] According to Bernard, this 'Judeo-American' imaginary not only supplants the goals of the Church, it also impedes the progress of French-Canadians who are attempting to build their national identity: 'The national feeling is what is missing the most with us and individuality is blooming around us; and the cinema, which is exclusive to Israeli-Americans, is favourable to its formation'.[47] It does not matter that '*le sens national*' that *L'Action française* proposed was anti-individual and anti-Semitic, to the extent that this doctrine supports the sublimation of the individual in a manner which parallels that of fascism; what this statement really meant is that the individualism which may develop from the cinema is at odds with the kind of national identity proposed by Bernard, Groulx, and others: one of an undifferentiated, and profoundly ahistorical, collectivity. Bernard concludes by contending that the cinema is now such a part of the popular imaginary, it is impossible to rid Québec society of it. Therefore, fire must be fought with fire: 'we must fight the cinema with the cinema, opposing the good against the bad'.[48] The Church therefore required counter-propaganda to ensure the survival of the traditions of the collectivity.

43 Harry Bernard, 'L'ennemi dans la place: théâtre et cinéma', *L'Action française* 12 (August 1924), p. 70.

44 Ibid., pp. 71–2.

45 Ibid., p. 73.

46 Ibid., p. 75.

47 Ibid., p. 76.

48 Ibid., p. 79.

Others did not believe even in the power of counter-propaganda. Whatever redeeming qualities the cinema possessed were there solely to seduce the innocent, as Father Phillipe Perrier argues, citing Father Archambeault in his essay '*Contre le cinéma, tous*': 'Do not let yourself be seduced by these common bribers who offer you the Jewish dechristianization even if they use, to convince us, a few of our compatriots who have forgotten their traditions and are infidels to the teachings of the Church'.[49] Around the same time, Hermas Bastien writes of how the cinema is the greatest evil that the Québécois have faced: 'Never, in our history, has our small people been victims of an agent as deadly as the cinema. This medium propagates an exoticism which disfigures our Christian and French soul and includes modes of thinking and acting that are the most barbarous of American civilization.'[50] Further on he writes that the cinema 'develops the kind of brute-man who gets rid of the heavy weight of his soul in order to trust his base instincts . . . the cinema represents for society . . . a slavery more pernicious than gambling, alcohol or opium.'[51]

The anti-Semitism found in these seminal texts of French-Canadian nationalism requires contextualization, as its meaning is continually contested. Authors such as Mordecai Richler and Esther Delisle have contended that there was a profoundly anti-Semitic overtone to certain key aspects of early nationalism in Québec.[52] Others have responded to these critiques by stating that anti-Semitism was a very small part of the nationalist agenda of Groulx and others of the 'nationalist elite', and that their work towards formulating a French-Canadian national consciousness cannot be dismissed simply because of a few egregious statements that were voiced in many places other than Québec at the time.[53] Neither of these views offers us sufficient insight into the Church's fears about the cinema or the context of *L'Action française*'s anti-Semitic stance. It seems obvious that the construction of 'the Jew and the cinema' in the writings of Groulx and other *L'Action française* writers plays an important role in developing the notion of a ethnically pure collectivity. This notion of a collectivity is central to the agenda of the early right-wing, religious nationalists in Québec: at its heart lies the fear that a collectivity has to protect itself from outside encroachment in order to remain pure and to survive. Well after anti-Semitic slurs had fallen away from nationalist doctrines, this guiding principle remained at the heart of right-wing nationalism in both North America and Europe. Furthermore, by uniting the Jew and cinema, the Church's two most hated enemies, Groulx was able to demonize the potential alternative public sphere of the cinema by claiming that the community which formed around it was based on foreign, and inherently evil, if not blasphemous, ideals.

The hyperbole of these texts demonstrates how threatened the Church felt by the popularity of the cinema. Until 1927, advocacy

49 Father Phillipe Perrier, 'Contre le cinéma, tous', *L'Action française* 17 (February 1927), p. 85.

50 Hermas Bastien, 'Le cinéma déformateur', *L'Action française* 17 (March 1927), p. 168.

51 Ibid., p. 169.

52 Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and Extreme Right-Wing Nationalism in French Canada from 1929–1939*, second edition (Toronto: Robert Davies Publishing, 1993), pp. 17–35; and Mordecai Richler, *Oh Canada! Oh Québec! Requiem for a Divided Country* (Toronto: Viking, 1992), pp. 78–97.

53 Pierre Anctil, *Le Devoir, les juifs et l'immigration: de Bourassa à Laurendeau* (Québec: Institut québécois de la researche sur la culture, 1988); Anctil, *Les Juifs de Montréal face au Québec de l'entre deux guerres: le rendez-vous manqué* (Québec: Institut québécois de la researche sur la culture, 1988); and Jean-François Lisée, 'Interview with Pierre Anctil', in William Dodge (ed.), *Boundaries of Identity: a Québec Reader* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992), pp. 151–6.

for the banning of the *scopes* by clergy remained on the level of rhetoric, but soon, a real event would catalyze the movement. In 1927, the Laurier cinema caught fire, leaving seventy-eight children dead.[54] This gave *L'Action française* a physical manifestation of the moral destruction they had seen in the cinema. *L'Action française* was outraged at this tragedy, and redoubled their efforts to regulate the cinema. In the February 1927 issue, Father Phillip Perrier outlined the recommendations of the journal to combat '*le cinéma meurtrier*': first, to restrict access to the cinema for children under the age of 16, whether accompanied by a parent or not; second, to close all movie theatres on Sunday; and, third, to censor all films that promote prurient interests.[55] Eventually, the provincial government, in response to the recommendations of the Boyer Commission, passed a law making it illegal for children under the age of sixteen to enter movie theatres. While this law could easily be framed as a public safety issue, it also prevented children from being influenced by the pernicious nature of the cinema. In essence, to appease the Church, the government passed a law which was designed to save the souls of the next generation from the temptations of the screen. Significantly, the government never introduced legislation on any of these other recommendations. The following year marked the development of sound – and necessarily the arrival of 'national cinemas' determined by and through language – which forever changed the landscape of film in Québec.

54 See David Levy, '50 years later: the Laurier Palace fire'. *The Montréal Gazette*, 8 January 1977, p. D-1.

55 Perrier, 'Contre le cinéma, tous', p. 84.

The tensions of the public

The present work has traced the emergence, development and trajectory of a constellation of discourses on national identity and publicness as they pertain to French-Canadian filmmaking and the emergence of a potential alternative public sphere. While I do not contend that the cinema, *a priori*, existed as a counter-hegemonic space within French-Canadian culture between the 1900s and 1920s, I do claim that the cinema's potential as a means of resistance is present as early as the screenings of Léo-Ernest Ouimet. It is important to stress the different levels of analysis that substantiate these claims, as I argue that the 'power' of the cinema lies at the intersection of: first, the public space; secondly, the audience; thirdly, the cinematic text; and, fourthly, the public discourses which surround the cinema. I have posited that one of the roles played by early cinema in Québecois culture has been as a site where radically shifting notions of the nation and national identity have been publicly negotiated. One could claim that these different levels of analysis are incommensurable and that the public use of space, the representation of national identity in the cinema, questions of spectatorship, and the use of the cinema as a means of reconfiguring the public sphere are

issues which need to be examined separately. Nevertheless, to examine how cinema developed as an alternative public sphere and how, for a brief period, the cinema was used as a means of cultural transformation necessitates examining where these different levels intersect. The public sphere itself is fed by many different types of media and discourses. As Charles Taylor notes:

> What is a public sphere? I want to describe it as a common space in which the members of society meet, through a variety of media (print, electronic) and also in face-to-face encounters, to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about those matters. I say 'a common space' because, although the media are multiple, as well as the exchanges taking place in them, they are deemed to be in principle inter-communicating. The discussion we may be having on television right now takes account of what was said in the newspaper this morning, which in turn reports on the radio debate of yesterday, and so on.[56]

In this theoretical framework, subjects are participants in the creation and dissemination of the cultural meanings of texts. Further, to position the cinema as a site of contestation allows one to avoid the pitfall of postulating a theory which is largely substantiated through a 'reading' of a given set of films that comprise a national cinema, making both film theory and national identity fit the parameters of the 'reading.' More importantly, it allows one to examine the variety of cultural, political and historical discourses which intersect in the public sphere of which image-making becomes a part. This, in essence, removes the cinema – and film theory – solely from the hermeticism of the screening room and positions it as a shifting and dynamic aspect of the cultural landscape.

It is important to delineate what I take to be the cultural 'impact' of the cinema within the public sphere. Adapting the critical paradigms outlined by Warner, one cannot contend that the cinema, in a simple causal manner, changed the public sphere, as if through an agency of its own.[57] Furthermore, one cannot claim that the cinema is ruled by technological specificities that are unchanging through time. In relation to eighteenth-century print technology, Warner writes: 'The assumption that technology is prior to culture results in a kind of retrodetermination whereby the political history of a technology is converted into the unfolding nature of that technology'.[58] The same must hold true for the cinema. The history of the development, projection and distribution of film points to the fact that the uses of the technology and the institutional, ideological, and cultural paradigms within which it functioned were highly contingent; filmmaking was largely determined by the contextual practices of the cultures in which the technology circulated.[59] To give but one example, the relationship between the movie camera and the

56 Charles Taylor, 'Liberal politics and the public sphere', in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 259.

57 Michael Warner, *The Republic of Letters: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

58 Ibid., p. 9.

59 For the history of the development of Canada's film industry, in the light of the effects of politics, globalization and capital, see Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: the Canadian State and Feature Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

Catholic Church in Québec is a highly complex and culturally specific one: the cinema was both the work of the Devil (or the Jews) and a tool used by priests to build the beginnings of a properly Québécois national identity, from their yearly screenings of *La Passion* to the ethnographic documentaries shot from the 1920s to the 1950s by travelling projectionist Father Albert Tessier, without doubt one of the unsung forefathers of *cinéma direct*.[60] These relations need to be examined in a synchronic manner, and not strictly by a causalist view of technological overdetermination. Therefore, I contend that the cinema did not 'change' the public and the State; neither did the public and the State 'change' the cinema. Instead, I believe the best way to understand the relationship of the alternative public sphere to the cinema is in a dialogical, non-linear manner. Nevertheless, I would hesitate to state that the cinema *allowed* individuals to come together and debate the concerns of the day in a rational manner and on equal ground; I would, however, contend that, at times, the cinema held the promise of this possibility, and that this promise often motivated social intervention in the real world, be it in relation to Church, State, poverty or national identity. This development, in a culture that so often has been marginalized by the dominant public sphere is, if not revolutionary, a radical reconfiguration of the social fabric of Québec.

60 Discussion's of Tessier's work can be found in: René Bouchard, *Filmographie d'Albert Tessier* (Montréal: Boréal, 1973); Bouchard, 'Un précurseur du cinéma direct', *Cinéma Québec* vol. 6, no. 1 (1977), pp. 19–24, 27–33; and David Clandfield, 'From the picturesque to the familiar: films of the French Unit at the NFB', *Ciné-tracts* 4 (1978), pp. 50–62.

The impossibility of science fiction: against Buckland's possible worlds

C. PAUL SELLORS

In his recent article on science fiction, possible worlds and aesthetic realism, Warren Buckland poses some interesting topics for discussion in Film Studies.[1] Most obviously, he argues that certain digitally generated images should be considered within the boundaries of aesthetic realism in film theory. If nothing else, this line of enquiry challenges us to reconsider the importance of indexicality in realist debates. More importantly, perhaps, he embarks on a topic very rarely given serious consideration in Film Studies, but which nevertheless possesses great potential for the discipline: the 'possible worlds' argument in modal philosophy. To date, film theory has been obsessed with the epistemological properties of spectatorship; serious thought has rarely been given to the metaphysics that underscore (at least) fictional representation. Modal philosophy, especially the possible worlds thesis, can help to redress this absence. Because of its rigorous development as a central component of analytical philosophy proper, modal philosophy can bring to film theory clear and valuable metaphysical concepts about the nature of filmic representation. However, although Buckland's ambition is worthy of acclaim, his execution exhibits conceptual confusions with the metaphysics which does not allow him to move beyond the problems of contemporary film theory.

Generally, he appears to get caught up in the hyperbole surrounding digital technologies and misses the strong metaphysical arguments at the core of the possible worlds thesis. This symptom is evident from the beginning of his article. In his introduction he states that

1 Warren Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction: Spielberg's digital dinosaurs, possible worlds, and the new aesthetic realism', *Screen*, vol. 40, no. 2 (1999), pp. 177–92.

beyond Spielberg's dinosaurs, possible world theory can enable film theorists to rethink the nature of filmic fictionality and representation by clarifying both the meaning of concepts such as mimeticism, realism, depiction, deception, and illusion, and the way that these are actualized in the cinema by techniques and technologies such as linear perspective, editing, and special effects.[2]

2 Ibid. pp. 177–8.

Buckland, to my mind, is certainly correct in his initial assertion: possible worlds theory does pose a way of thinking clearly about many of the concepts often thrown about somewhat carelessly in Film Studies. However, this effort will prove futile if we fail, as Buckland does, to treat the philosophy and the metaphysics seriously and literally – not metaphorically. The possible worlds argument is a metaphysical philosophy that seeks to illuminate the nature of necessity, contingency, possibility and impossibility. It has no interest in the technologies and techniques that render these worlds knowable. Otherwise, philosophers would have been unable to proceed in modal philosophy as well as they have, armed merely with logical notation and the odd sentence. Visual fictions based on actual-world possibility, regardless of how *convincing* their images may appear, do not articulate possible worlds. In order to underscore the problems in Buckland's paper, I will restrict myself to his two main theses: the realist digital imaging argument and the possible worlds argument.

Buckland begins by maintaining that digital technologies, used in the service of realism, offer cinema something *new* that allows for a rendering, or, as he says, 'articulation' of what is possible. These new image-generating capabilities embellish the 'nineteenth-century technologies' on which film is founded, allowing filmmakers seamlessly to render any possible state of affairs imaginable. Such remarks, at first glance, seem quite blatantly to identify a technological determinist's position. However, Buckland strives to separate himself from an ontology of digital imaging technologies in film, arguing instead that there is a distinction to be made between digital effects as spectacles and as aesthetically realist images.[3] He then defends the digitally composed or enhanced realist image against its critics by suggesting that these thinkers (a) merely reproduce the arguments of naive auteur criticism and (b) underestimate the capacity of such digitally enhanced films to articulate possible worlds.[4]

3 This distinction with the image prompts consideration about digital sound in the cinema. Are there similar questions to be asked about realist digital sound, however generated, and specifically identifiable, non-realistic sound effects?

4 Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction', p. 178.

Buckland argues that digital imaging technologies, when used for a realist aesthetic, are able to produce images of things that do not exist, but could. He then takes this analysis one step further, asserting that by articulating things that could exist but do not, films possessing such images present possible worlds. However, he offers no argument to develop this connection between images and worlds;

instead, he posits it based on an apparent similarity. Loosely put, films can present non-actual states of affairs, and modal philosophy talks about non-actual states of affairs. Thus, if a fiction film is depicting something that could happen in the real world then it is depicting a possible world. The starting point of this argument is sound enough: both fictions and possible worlds represent non-actual states of affairs.[5] Yet despite the viability of this premiss, it does not necessarily follow that non-actual states of affairs in visual fictions produce possible worlds, and Buckland does not offer an argument to explain how they could. Indeed, Buckland leaves his reader with only the slightest hint of what type of modal philosophy he even has in mind. Tucked away in a footnote, Buckland states that:

> the view of possible worlds I outline in the text is called moderate realism, and is developed by Alvin Plantinga, Robert Stalnaker and Saul Kripke, among others. They avoid the extreme claims made by modal realists and anti-realists by setting up a hierarchy between actual and possible worlds.[6]

These thinkers are anything but unified in their positions. In the body of his paper, however, Buckland then cites David Lewis's common language defence of modal realism (a position supposedly contrary to Buckland's) to suggest what possible worlds are. But even this does not present a rigorous definition, as Stalnaker points out.

> Lewis does not intend this as a knockdown argument. It is only a presumption that the sentences of ordinary language be taken at face value, and the presumption can be defeated if the naïve reading of the sentences leads to problems which can be avoided by an alternative analysis. . . .
>
> But for this to be convincing, the shift from 'ways things might have been' to 'possible worlds' must be an innocent terminological substitution, and I do not believe that, as Lewis develops the concept of a possible world, it is.[7]

Unfortunately Buckland is silent on precisely what *he* means by a 'possible world'. Yet he has stated that he is sympathetic to the moderate view, even if, at times, he seems to align himself more closely with Lewis' extreme realism. I will therefore consider his arguments against the background of the thinkers he refers to. Exactly which modal theory he adopts is, in the end, not entirely significant, however. I will argue that fictions can *never* articulate possible worlds, even though, from an interpretive point of view, they may engage actual-world possibility.

Of the two areas mentioned above, Buckland's digital realism argument is the most straightforward and will be addressed first. In it he attempts to open a timely discussion on digital technologies in film, yet attributes to many of the images produced with this

5 Gideon Rosen relies on this common property to develop his modal philosophy, entitled 'modal fictionalism' See Gideon Rosen, 'Modal fictionalism', *Mind*, no 99 (1990), pp. 327–54 For a discussion of Rosen's modal fictionalism, see *Analysis*, from vol 53, no. 2 (1993) to vol 55, no 2 (1995).

6 Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction', p. 180, n. 11.

7 Robert C Stalnaker, 'Possible worlds', *Noûs*, no 10 (1976), pp 66–7

technology a status which, I will contend, they do not deserve. The remainder of this paper will be committed to demonstrating the fundamental problems of mapping digital imaging, or any mode of imaging for that matter, *directly* onto the possible worlds thesis. Yet the failure of Buckland's argument does not justify eliminating modal philosophy from film theory. On the contrary, in the conclusion of this paper I will outline a suggestion of how modal philosophy can proceed in the study of fiction, both filmic and otherwise.

In his introduction Buckland is careful not to embrace a rigid technological determinist position, drawing a distinction within digital imaging via its diegetic function. He places outside of his argument about the new aesthetic realism digital effects employed specifically for spectacle. Yet the arguments he offers to support setting aside digital spectacles do not appear to exclude optically produced spectacles, except by omission. Are they necessarily eliminated from his position? He offers no reason to suspect that they are. If this is correct, then Buckland maintains that optical effects obstruct realism in film. In fact he hints at as much when he discusses Bazin's views on montage. However, if Buckland would agree that both optical and digital effects produced for spectacle inhibit the realist image, then how can he justify his position that special effects rendered digitally in the service of the realist image function any differently from similarly intended effects produced through optical methods? It appears his answer is that digital technologies, such as those used in Spielberg's dinosaur films, allow for a level of spatial integration in filmic images that has not previously been possible. 'The interactions created between the digital dinosaurs and live action/real backgrounds within a single shot help to create a new realism in the digital image, for the effects create the illusion of spatial and diegetic unity'.[8] He then extends this argument to suggest that this illusion is the articulation of a possible world itself. Assuming for the moment that Buckland is correct and films like *Jurassic Park* (1993) and *The Lost World* (1997) can render possible worlds, then he has to justify his implicit assertion that digital technologies are doing something that optical technologies are incapable of.

To proceed we must first have before us a definition of a possible world. Within Buckland's paper there are a few hints that will allow us to adopt a working definition. I assume he would agree that possibility can be defined as something like 'the way things could have been in the actual world'. Further, since he aligns himself with moderate realists, it should be possible, for the moment, to pirate Alvin Plantinga's understanding of possible worlds: 'for every (possible) temporally invariant proposition or state of affairs there is a possible world in which it is true or obtains'. This, however, only maps modality *de dicto*. Plantinga makes a case for modality *de re* by adding that

8 Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction', p. 189. While I will not address the issue of *illusion* in the body of this paper, I must here suggest that reference to such mental states as illusion and believability is indexical of the problematic metaphysics underscoring Buckland's work. I would argue that the combination of real action and digital dinosaurs does not *create the illusion* of spatial and diegetic unity, but that the diegetic unity of the film is materially composed of both digital and optical elements.

> Concrete objects such as you and I have properties in worlds. This isn't as trifling as it sounds. An object **x** has a property **P** in a world **w** if and only if it is not possible that **w** be actual and **x** exist but fail to have **P** – alternatively, if and only if **w** includes **x**'s having **P**. An object having a property in a world, obviously enough, is no more than a special case of an object having a property in a proposition or state of affairs, where **x** has **P** in a proposition **A** if and only if it is not possible that **A** be true and **x** exist but fail to have **P**.[9]

This position he classifies as serious actualism. He later constrains his definition further, maintaining that there is a potential difficulty, as one property objects could possess is nonexistence, which introduces a contradiction. Some thinkers, such as Terence Parsons, maintain and defend the value of this contradiction, but Plantinga contends that they confuse something being true *in* worlds with something being true *at* worlds.[10] Nonexistence maps the impossible case. 'So if Socrates satisfies ~ **(x exists)** in **w**, then **w** is not possible after all, contrary to hypothesis'.[11] I will also add, as Plantinga does, that possible worlds are maximal sets: in a possible world every proposition and state of affairs will either obtain or fail to obtain (either *P* or ~*P*, they cannot co-exist), and there is a world where all propositions and states of affairs can be true together.[12]

Thus, according to Buckland, Spielberg's dinosaur films *show*[13] a possible extension or manifestation of the scientific work that is actually being undertaken in our world. Digital 3-D modelling, he continues, allows us to see these dinosaurs behaving in a way that we may believe they would in our world if they existed. I have serious reservations if this satisfies the conditions for a possible world, which I will address below. For the moment I will leave Buckland's assumption unchallenged. If these films constitute a possible world, then Buckland, if I follow his argument, should also be able to demonstrate that films enhanced with realist optical special effects fail to articulate possible worlds. Yet in *The Last Laugh* (1924), Murnau and Schüfftan quite *convincingly* employ models and mirrors to create a setting which does not exist. Certainly this too articulates a non-actual, but possible state of affairs – a possible world.

I am not sure from his article how Buckland would combat this problem, or even if he thinks there is a problem here to address. Nevertheless, he could retort that there are numerous hotel doormen, some of whom might have even been demoted and then later rescued from their dismal lives by a rich benefactor. In this sense, *The Last Laugh* is not articulating a possible world, but elements of the actual world. It is only the recombination of these components which suggests it could be considered possible, since this combination may not exist or have existed. This explanation will not suffice for

9 Alvin Plantinga, 'Two concepts of modality: modal realism and modal reductionism', *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 1 (1987), p. 193.

10 Plantinga, 'Two concepts of modality', p. 200.

11 Ibid., p. 201.

12 Ibid., p. 192; Robert Merrihew Adams, 'Theories of actuality', *Noûs*, no. 8 (1974), pp. 211, 225.

13 Buckland's terminology frustrates a clear understanding of the relationship between the images on screen and possible worlds. He frequently states that fictions 'articulate' or 'present' possible worlds. It is unclear whether he means that they describe, show, or constitute them. In the absence of an explicit commitment I will arbitrarily choose the middle term. However, if he means either describe or constitute, most, if not all of my objections should still hold.

Buckland, since it appears to move towards the combinatorial theory of possibility expressed by D.M. Armstrong.[14] As re-combinations are modal statements, this optically presented world still seems to present the type of possible world Buckland has in mind. Perhaps the problem with my example is that it is too close to what occurs in daily existence to be clear. Thus, considering examples from science fiction that sketch increasingly remote possibilities (which is, after all, the focus of Buckland's article) may help to clarify matters.

Three science fiction films of the late 1960s and 1970s – *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Robert Wise, 1979), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) – should magnify the difficulties Buckland develops by privileging realist digital images. All of these, to varying degrees, offer images and situations of space travel depicted by realist optical special effects. Both manned lunar travel and unmanned interplanetary travel are actual occurrences. Manned interplanetary travel is certainly possible, given our level of scientific knowledge, although interstellar travel is, perhaps, just a little bit fantastic. Even though many of the effects in these films exist for spectacle, it seems uncontroversial to suggest that most are employed to render what space travel *could be like*. The realist effects in these films are produced, however, through blue screen – that is, optical – technology. Buckland could very easily dismiss *Star Wars* from our discussion of possible worlds because the space travel in that film is based on the physical principles of air travel in our atmosphere. Despite the recent mathematical discoveries which have rendered warp drive theoretically possible, we could also dismiss *Star Trek* for similar reasons, although a little more begrudgingly.

However, Kubrick's film poses a distinct problem; with one or two exceptions, the space flights in *2001* proceed on actual world possibilities that are rendered in the film through optical processes. Apart from the logarithmic scale of fidelity Bazin mythologized about, I fail to see any fundamental distinction under Buckland's account between the presentation of a 'possible world' in *2001* and *Jurassic Park*. Yet Buckland maintains that 'film (or, at least, the *post-photographic*, or *digital image*) has the *unique* capacity to present access to possible worlds, and to combine seamlessly the actual with the possible, by means of digital special effects'.[15] The technological limitations of optical processes 'eventually fall short in convincing the increasingly sophisticated spectator that the separate events occupy the same diegesis'.[16] This seems odd. Even though the original King Kong may not always seem 'real', it is unlikely that spectators felt him not to be of the same diegesis as, or outside the diegesis of, the film. Further, if the *obviousness* of film production is a problem for realism, then any film employing a star would fail to meet this realism criterion also. I further have difficulties believing that digital renderings convince normal spectators that Spielberg's

14 D.M. Armstrong, 'The nature of possibility', *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1986), pp. 575–94.

15 Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction', p. 182. Emphasis mine.

16 Ibid., p. 185.

dinosaurs occupy the film's diegesis representationally in a manner different from the way that the spaceship 'Discovery' hangs in space. Moreover, it seems unlikely that spectators constantly think, when watching even a poorly produced optical effect, that, as the squire in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1975) exclaims upon seeing Camelot, 'it's only a model!'[17] Buckland's defence of digital realism based on Bazin's categories of realism is arbitrary and unconvincing.[18] His assertion that digital special effects have any fundamental or privileged role to play in rendering films as possible worlds, if this is indeed the point that he wishes to make, is a non-starter.

But there is a more fundamental problem in Buckland's argument. His evocation of the concept of possible worlds, whether he attributes it to digital imaging or concedes that there are other elements of film production worth considering, contradicts modal philosophy and even recent work in the theory of fiction. First, there are problems with even the limited definitions he offers. He considers possible worlds as something like extensions of actual world possibility (which, though sparse, is uncontroversial), but then equates the 'fantastic' with the 'impossible', which is certainly incorrect.[19] Moreover, he assumes that a rendering of actual world possibility in film establishes a film, or fiction, as a possible world. This is a jump not supported by the possible worlds theses he notes.

The problem, it seems, is that he attempts to turn a metaphysical thesis into an epistemological one. This is clearly evident in the following passage:

> The spectator's system of belief can be characterized in terms of 'What if', 'As if', or 'What might have been' propositional attitudes. The modality of these propositions indicate [*sic*] that (*pace* the modal realism of David Lewis), the existence of possible worlds is mind dependent. This conceptual approach to possible worlds reveals the hierarchy set up by possible world theorists, which posits that only actual states of affairs exist – that is, are mind independent. Possible, or unactualized states of affairs are mind dependent.[20]

This is a very coarse and erroneous paraphrase of a very dense and rich body of philosophy forwarded by a number of thinkers. To demonstrate the difficulties with this definition, it will be helpful to begin with a brief discussion of what possible worlds theses aim to achieve in modal philosophy, and then illustrate the distance between Buckland's characterization of possible worlds and the positions held by some of the figures he mentions.

Modality is a distinctly metaphysical thesis that aims to clarify how things could have been other than the way they are. These possibilities are not the mind-dependent properties of what is conceivable, although conceivability may correspond with what is

17 Or if they did, such a person would quite possibly also state that the dinosaurs are only computer generations.

18 This situation is not aided by Buckland's unproblematized employment of suture theory, considering the rigorous critiques that have been levied against it from analytical film theory.

19 Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction', p. 182.

20 Ibid., p. 191.

possible. There are many things that are possible that have not been conceived of, and conversely there are many things that are conceivable that are not possible. An example of the latter case will help to clarify this point. The existence of a squared circle is certainly conceivable. However, possessing the properties of right angles and not right angles, this object simultaneously exhibits contradictory properties, and is therefore impossible. I will suggest later that fictions are of this type.

Buckland wishes to distance himself (one can assume) from the heavy existential commitments of David Lewis's extreme modal realism. But since many philosophers (including those that Buckland mentions) start with Lewis, and since Buckland himself quotes a frequently referenced passage from Lewis's *Counterfactuals* in order to sketch a basic premiss of possible worlds, then briefly outlining Lewis' position will provide a reasonable starting point.

The possible worlds argument has its feet firmly planted in Leibniz's theology. Stalnaker points out that 'according to Leibniz, the universe – the actual world – is one of an infinite number of possible worlds existing in the mind of God. God created the universe by actualizing one of these possible worlds – the best one'.[21] Modern philosophers have found this model, stripped of its theology, to be valuable for understanding the nature of possibility. However, most maintain that the model is itself only a myth, or metaphor, which has distinct heuristic advantages, but which lacks explanatory efficacy. The philosopher of modality has therefore to explain that possible worlds do more than map 'the relationships among the formulae of modal logic'.[22] David Lewis has taken this challenge to its extreme, arguing that possible worlds can fulfil this task required of them because they are more than mere myth – they exist.[23] To defend this position he solicits common beliefs and opinions.

> I believe, and so do you, that things could have been different in countless ways. . . . I believe permissible paraphrases of what I believe; taking the paraphrase at its face value, I therefore believe in the existence of entities which might be called 'ways things could have been'. I prefer to call them 'possible worlds'.[24]

Lewis contends that these worlds are fully-realized, yet isolated worlds where possibilities in our world exist actually. Here the term 'actually' is to be understood as an indexical term, stating that, since all worlds are internally complete and robust, each is actual with respect to itself. Thus, to us, our world is the only actual world, but a resident of world *w* sees that world as actual. Although there are certain benefits to this theory of modality, many philosophers find the existential cost extremely high and reject that part of the theory. As a result, they often find themselves in the potentially precarious situation of 'asserting the existence of worlds at one moment while

21 Stalnaker, 'Possible worlds', p. 65.

22 Ibid., p. 66.

23 The main problem that the possible worlds thesis confronts is the difficulty of extending truth value to the primitive modal operators: necessity (□) and possibility (◇). We cannot determine, given that Φ is true, the truth value of □Φ, since it may be true necessarily or contingently. The possible worlds thesis offers a way out of this difficulty by replacing the modal primitives with worlds; Φ is necessary if it obtains in all possible worlds, possible if it obtains in one or more possible worlds, and impossible if it does not obtain in any possible world. For a concise description of the problem and some solutions, see Graeme Forbes, 'Modal logic', in Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 499–502.

24 David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 84, quoted in Stalnaker, 'Possible worlds', p. 66, Plantinga, 'Two concepts', p. 203, and Buckland, 'Between science fact and science fiction', p. 180.

denying them at another'.[25] There are numerous solutions to this difficulty, many of which fall into what we can broadly call moderate realism about possible worlds. While the field of moderate realism is too vast to discuss extensively here, it is possible to survey some of the more valuable terrain.

Robert Adams describes Lewis's position as *possibilist*, and offers *actualism* as a response. There are two (perhaps three) variations to consider here. First is hard actualism, which more or less characterizes Gideon Rosen's *modal fictionalism*. 'The hard actualist can still use what he regards as the fiction of a plurality of possible worlds as a heuristic device in thinking about theories and problems of modality; but the possible worlds will not figure in any theory which he asserts at the conclusions of his deliberations'. Adams rejects hard actualism, adopting instead what he classifies as *soft actualism*. 'According to *soft actualism*, on the other hand, there are nonactual possible worlds, but they are logically constructed from the furniture of the actual world; truths in which they are said to exist are reducible in the way demanded by actualism'. That is, 'they must be reducible to statements in which the only things there are said to be are things which there are in the actual world and which are not identical with nonactual possibles'.[26] Alvin Plantinga, advocating *serious actualism*, outlines a similar view. Further, these thinkers, like Lewis, argue for fully realized worlds by maintaining a 'maximal consistent set of propositions'.[27] Robert Stalnaker distances himself at this point, questioning the need to have fully realized worlds to discuss actual possibility. He also contends that actualists' reduction of possible worlds to propositions lacks clarity because their theories offer no explanation of what possible worlds are 'independent of the notions which possible worlds are intended to explain'.[28] Instead, Stalnaker inverts their model and reduces propositions to possible worlds, while maintaining the link (as the actualists do also) between propositions and the objects of propositions (or modality *de re*). 'We can deduce from what has already been build into the world-story theory that there is a set of propositions of which all propositions are truth-functions: this is the set of strongest contingent propositions which are members of just one world-story'.[29]

But neither moderate realists' concentration on propositions, their rejection of Lewis's existent, non-actual possible worlds, nor their assertions that possible worlds are constructions, justify the assertion that possible worlds are mind dependent, as Buckland thinks. Indeed, such a position would be a licence for the most extreme anti-realism. Although philosophers can and do create worlds in their arguments, these worlds are not necessarily possible worlds. They only become possible worlds if they meet the requirements for possibility. How else could possibility be distinguished from impossibility? Further, there may also be far more possibilities than can be conceived of by humans. Stalnaker makes this clear:

25 Rosen, 'Modal fictionalism', pp. 327–8.

26 Adams, 'Theories of actuality', p. 224.

27 Stalnaker,'Possible worlds', p. 71.

28 Ibid., p. 70.

29 Ibid., p. 74.

> It may not be possible to express all such propositions since it may not be possible, in any actual language, to refer to such sets; it may not be humanly possible to believe or disbelieve some such propositions, since it may not be humanly possible to grasp them. But if this is so, it is surely a contingent human limitation which should not restrict the range of potential objects of propositional attitudes.[30]

30 Ibid., p. 73.

The range of possibility is determined by the properties of the world itself, not what any given philosopher thinks about the world.

Given that possible worlds are not mind dependent, is it still possible to accept that at least Spielberg's dinosaur fictions *are*, or articulate, possible worlds? To answer this question it will help to develop Buckland's arguments through both modality proper and world-story or story-prefix arguments held by actualists. I assume that Buckland finds the following statement incredible, since he, like myself, does not really believe that there are worlds other than the actual world, at least the type of world that Lewis has in mind.

1) *There is a (non-actual) possible world at which there are blue swans.*

Gideon Rosen also sides with us sceptics, not because he doubts the possibility of blue swans, they certainly are possible, but because he does not believe that there exists a world that possesses blue swans. Yet he is loath to surrender the heuristic power of modal realism, so he does not dismiss it outright. Instead, he argues for a deflationist interpretation to Lewis' thesis, which allows for 'all the benefits of talking about possible worlds without the ontological costs'.[31] He recognizes that moderate modal statements are remarkably similar to fictional statements: they outline a state of affairs in a constrained environment which we have opinions about, but without the commitment of asserting the existence of these objects or states of affairs. Rosen make palatable Lewis's modal statement by affixing a *story prefix*[32] – allowing one to assert a statement in one breath while, without contradiction, denying the existential claim in the next. Thus, statement 1 is really an abridged version of

31 Rosen, 'Modal fictionalism', p. 330.

2) *According to the hypothesis of a plurality of worlds, there is a world W such that at W there are blue swans.*

32 'Call any sentential operator of the form "In the fiction *F*, ... " or "According to such and such a story ... " a *story prefix*. The moral ... is that as we ordinarily understand these expressions, quantification within the scope of a story prefix is not existentially committing. You can believe "According to the fiction *F*, $\exists xPx$" without believing "$\exists xPx$"; for as a rule, the former does not entail the latter'. Ibid., p. 331.

Interestingly, Rosen pirates this strategy from Lewis himself. In his article 'Truth in fiction',[33] Lewis has already applied the fictional prefix in the fictional case, arguing correctly that the statement

33 David Lewis, 'Truth in fiction', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1978), pp. 37–46.

3) *There is a brilliant detective named Sherlock Holmes residing at 221b Baker Street*

is certainly false, while

4) *In the Holmes stories, there is a brilliant detective named Sherlock Holmes residing at 221b Baker Street*

is true. Since the story-prefix is employed to eliminate existential baggage while maintaining the modal claim, it should be possible to paraphrase each of the preceding statements using the non-reductive modal primitive:

5) *Possibly there could have been blue swans.*

We are in trouble, however, if we assert a similar paraphrase about Sherlock Holmes:

6) *Possibly there could have been a brilliant detective named Sherlock Holmes at 221b Baker Street.*

While this is perhaps true, it is not true in the sense that we are trying to discuss. There may have been, by some incredible stroke of coincidence, a detective of that name and that calibre residing at that location. However, it would not be the same Sherlock Holmes that we have in mind when we discuss the Sherlock Holmes stories. The problem is twofold. First, because fictional objects and characters are nonexistent it is debatable whether modal statements about fictions can ever be anything other than *de dicto* statements, unlike modal statements proper which express both modality *de dicto* and *de re*. Second, the proposition about blue swans references our world, whereas the Sherlock Holmes statement references an isolated Sherlock Holmes world. Yet Buckland claims that Spielberg's dinosaur films present a possible world. Thus, it seems as if he commits himself to the assertion that

7) *It is possible that dinosaurs can be grown from fossil DNA*

is true. In fact, this is a true statement and is the subject of the BBC programme *Spielberg and the Dinosaurs*. The explicit reference world of the BBC programme is our world where there are no dinosaurs, but there could be. However, Buckland seems to be arguing that the statement

8) *In the Spielberg films dinosaurs have been grown from fossil DNA*

is reducible to sentence 7. This cannot be correct. Since *these* dinosaurs do not exist, even at the genetic level, they cannot have properties in our world. On a moderate realist account such as Plantinga's, any dinosaurs that may come into existence will not be these dinosaurs. Thus, Spielberg's dinosaurs face the same existential barriers as Doyle's detective.

Both our extreme modal realist David Lewis and one of our moderate realists Saul Kripke have elaborated on this problem. Lewis states that

> Maybe there was a man Conan Doyle never heard of whose actual adventures chanced to fit the stories in every detail. Maybe he

even was named 'Sherlock Holmes'. Improbable, incredible, but surely possible! Now consider the name 'Sherlock Holmes', *as used in the stories*. Does the name, so used, refer to the man whom Conan Doyle never heard of? Surely not! It is irrelevant that a homonymous name is used by some people, not including Conan Doyle, to refer to this man. We must distinguish between the homonyms, just as we would distinguish the name London (England) from London (Ontario). It is false at our world that the name 'Sherlock Holmes', as used in the stories, refers to someone.[34]

34 Ibid., p. 39.

Kripke holds a similar view:

> The mere discovery that there was indeed a detective with exploits like those of Sherlock Holmes would not show that Conan Doyle was writing *about* this man; it is theoretically possible, though in practice fantastically unlikely, that Doyle was writing pure fiction with only a coincidental resemblance to the actual man. (See the characteristic disclaimer: 'The characters in this work are fictional, and any resemblance to anyone, living or dead, is purely coincidental'.) Similarly, I hold the metaphysical view that, granted there was no Sherlock Holmes, one cannot say of any possible person that he *would have been* Sherlock Holmes, had he existed. Several distinct possible people, and even actual ones such as Darwin or Jack the Ripper, might have performed the exploits of Holmes, but there is none of whom we can say that he would have been Holmes had he performed these exploits. For if so, which one?
>
> I thus could no longer write, as I once did, that 'Holmes does not exist, but in other states of affairs, he would have existed'. . . . The quoted assertion gives the erroneous impression that a fictional name such as 'Holmes' names a particular possible-but-not-actual individual.[35]

35 Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 157–8.

It is Kripke who holds the key to the objection. If we are to say that a fictional entity is possible, then that entity has to identify a possible entity. Although Kripke allows for non-actual possibles, there is still the substantial problem of which of these non-actual possibles corresponds with any given dinosaur in the film. Since none do, for the same reason that no actual or possible person could have been Holmes, Spielberg's creatures cannot be possible.

Actualists offer a different objection: nonexistent objects (what Lewis describes as alien properties) offend the basic metaphysics of the theory. Plantinga explains: 'there may be more things than are dreamt of in our philosophy, but there aren't more things than all the things that exist; and while there could have been things distinct from each other of the things that exist, it does not follow that there are some things that do not exist but could have'.[36] Buckland, if he

36 Plantinga, 'Two concepts', p. 196.

wishes to remain a moderate realist, has to demonstrate that Spielberg's dinosaurs are not alien. This is no small task. But even if Buckland wishes to become a little more extreme in his realism to dodge the problem of alien properties, the way still seems closed, since the extreme realist contends that there is nothing more than a homonymous relationship between possible and fictional dinosaurs.[37]

Buckland might still have room to object. He could agree that any individual dinosaur in the film would fail to meet the criteria for possibility, yet still insist that the re-emergence of dinosaurs is a possibility stemming from existing scientific knowledge. As such, the dinosaurs that emerge from this process in the film are the possible products of the actual world possibility. At first glance even the scientific process is merely homonymous with the actual world possibility of the re-emergence of the dinosaurs. Nevertheless, for the moment Buckland's objection can stand and we can assume that the film is a possible world representing the possible re-emergence of dinosaurs in the actual world. However, this brings about the very difficult conclusion to swallow that impossible characters undertake possible operations in a possible world. If this is the case then we would further have to grant that impossible characters could undertake these operations in the actual world. I hope I am not the only one who finds this unlikely.

Clearly there does not seem to be much hope to rescue fictional worlds, however constructed, as possible worlds; fictions contradict the very foundations of possible worlds metaphysics. However, it is this contradiction which clears space to consider fictions under modal philosophy – not as possible worlds, but rather as *impossible worlds*. Thomas Pavel, working in the field of Meinongian semantics, has developed some similar ideas, although from a slightly different direction.[38] Other philosophers have contributed a small but valuable body of literature on nonexistent and fictional objects, very little of which has been considered by film scholars. Generally, the problem for fiction is the same that Buckland implicitly raises through modal realism: how can we state that there is something true of a fiction? It is important to clarify that 'truth', in the sense being discussed here, is not an interpretive truth, but a metaphysical truth of sorts. Common sense about fictional film suggests that spectators *look in* on a fictional world that exists *a priori*, yet the main body of film theory contends that film spectation is a creative or constructive process. While these processes, however defined, are certainly part of how we make sense of what we see in a filmic fiction, they are hardly capable of determining what is true of a fiction. It is time to take back from epistemology what is rightfully metaphysical property.

Of the two issues I have raised in this paper, Buckland's first argument about digitality falls short of any radical claim that he might wish to make. Although he may be correct that digital imaging

37 Gregory Currie criticizes the notion of fictional worlds as possible worlds in *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). While I agree with Currie that possible worlds and fictional worlds cannot be identical, I disagree with his arguments. Currie maintains that the problem of indeterminacy proves fatal for this line of enquiry because it does not allow us to identify which possible world a fiction is. He arrives at this conclusion because he sees no reason to maintain a realist view about fiction. I contend that one can develop a realist view of fiction, provided it is built on the notion of *impossibility*. Indeterminacy is then not a problem if a distinction is maintained between the fictional world and the fiction narrated.

38 I find it very curious that Buckland only references Pavel in a section heading, considering that Pavel has published perhaps the most extensive work on the issues of nonexistent objects, possible worlds and fiction. See Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986).

has the capacity to erase its traces of production, there seems little reason to accept that this presents anything new to the cinema. It is equally possible that the *appearance* of the digital dinosaurs will become dated as new technologies roll out to aid film production. I suspect that these creatures will prove more valuable to the historian of film aesthetics than the film theorist.

In his second argument he attaches too much metaphysical weight to a simple interpretive point: that science fiction allows us to consider possible manifestations of our current state of affairs. Neither realist modal philosophy nor aesthetic realism are required to enable this discussion. Nevertheless, if his task is to identify a solid metaphysical foundation in fiction film, then he has started from a correct premiss: both fiction and possible worlds articulate non-actual states of affairs. However, fictional worlds and possible worlds are not, and cannot be, identical. The possible worlds thesis looks to understand how the world could have been different, which is a problem for metaphysics. Fiction, at least of the type Buckland considers, poses an epistemological question: 'What if?'. 'It is possible that' and 'What if?' are not the same question. The diegesis of the dinosaur films suggests an analogue of what our world *could be like* if we brought them back into being. It does not articulate the possibility of dinosaurs, even if they are *actually* possible. This is not a simple quibble over terminology; if we get the metaphysics wrong then we will obfuscate our understanding of the nature of visual fictions through the very philosophy employed to clarify it.

If the dinosaur films do not articulate a possible world, then the digital imaging process is a more trivial matter than Buckland realizes. Not only can it not articulate or render possible worlds, it also does not offer cinema anything new. It merely (or potentially) at best hides its own index of construction better than older technologies have, but does not propose anything fundamentally different from what spectators were presented with when Godzilla pummelled Tokyo decades ago. Buckland has a mountain to move to prove his thesis sound. However, if the objections expressed above are unfounded and Buckland is correct, then it is possible that he could recruit some of Spielberg's bigger dinosaurs to lend a hand.

reports and debates

report:

Competitiveness policy and economic organization: the case of the British film industry

STEPHEN PRATTEN and SIMON DEAKIN

The British film industry has long been characterized as highly volatile, chronically unstable and liable to recurrent crises.[1] However, there is now a new emphasis on film policy which sees the industry as possessing considerable potential for growth. The report of the Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, published in March 1998, identified a key role for government in promoting a strategic response to the industry's structural problems:

> It is clear that the industry will not be able to provide audiences with a consistent supply of commercially successful British movies until it transforms its current fragmented structure into an effective integrated industrial process. We must be prepared for such a transformation to take a long time and it must be market led. We can however seek to create conditions favourable to it and to help move the market in the right direction by means of strategic use of public and private funds, investment incentives and active encouragement.[2]

This perception of a film industry with inherent but unrealized potential which it is the role of government to unlock, albeit in tandem with the market, stands in sharp contrast to the orientation

1 Political and Economic Planning (PEP), *The British Film Industry* (London: PEP, 1952); Geoffrey McNab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry* (London: Routledge, 1993); Sally Hibbin, 'Britain has a new film establishment and it is leading us towards disaster', *New Statesman*, 27 March 1998, pp. 40–41.

2 Film Policy Review Group (FPRG), *A Bigger Picture* (London: Department of Media, Culture and Sport, 1998), p. 18.

which characterized the direction of British film policy during much of the 1980s. The 1984 White Paper on *Film Policy* dictated an approach which was to be in line with 'the government's approach to industry generally'; this implied policies which would effectively set the film industry 'free' by doing away with 'an 'intrusive regulatory framework'. As a result, the core components of film policy throughout the postwar period – tax writeoffs, the quota system, the recycling of profits from exhibition back to British producers through the 'Eady levy', and direct government financing for film investment – were largely removed. The end result, however, was to accelerate the fragmentation of the industry and to precipitate a crisis in production which saw the number of British-made films fall to a mere thirty in 1989.[3] This deregulatory policy was only reversed with the election of a Labour government in 1997.

3 John Hill, 'British film policy', in Albert Moran (ed.), *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Documents such as *A Bigger Picture* and the 1984 *Film Policy* White Paper are based on assumptions about the nature of the competitive process and the role of government in promoting improved economic performance. Often, however, these assumptions are not clearly articulated and their implications not fully thought through. The purpose of this article is to examine more precisely the nature of the competitive process and of what we may call 'competitiveness policy'. The British film industry forms both the focus for our theoretical and conceptual analysis and a case study of the goals which policy of this kind may be expected to achieve. We aim to explore, in particular, the relationship between competitiveness and organizational form, and the potential of various kinds of policy intervention to transform the prospects of a sector such as film in the face of the weight of its historical development.

The meaning of 'competitiveness policy'

The view that government should play a role in promoting 'competitiveness' is now widely held both in the UK and elsewhere. One of the first bodies to be charged with articulating this goal was the US National Competitiveness Council, which was set up in the late 1980s. In the UK, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has analyzed competitiveness in a series of White Papers, the first of which dates back to the mid 1980s. The European Commission published its own White Paper on *Competitiveness, Growth and Employment* in 1993, and in 1997 the Treaty of Amsterdam made 'the strengthening of the competitiveness of Community industry' one of the aims and objectives of the EC. However, there is some confusion over precisely what 'competitiveness' means in this context and what the growing number of policy initiatives are trying to achieve.

A market may be said to be 'competitive' if it is characterized by

active competition between rival producers. In a perfectly competitive market, the working of the price mechanism ensures that producers supply the precise quantity of goods demanded by consumers at the lowest possible cost. In this situation, 'technical' efficiency, or the cost-effective use of inputs to produce a given set of outputs, is the result of the ever-present threat that consumers will switch to lower-cost producers. 'Allocative' efficiency is also guaranteed in the sense that in the state of competitive equilibrium, where all gains from trade are realized, the respective utilities of all market participants (consumers and producers) are (by definition) maximized.

Governments and legal systems have a number of instruments at their disposal for promoting competitive markets in the sense just described. These include antitrust laws and administrative controls over mergers, which seek to remove 'distortions' or 'restrictions' on competition between producers operating in the same market. However, this well-established area of 'competition policy' is quite distinct from the more recent focus on 'competitiveness'. On the whole, competition policy seeks to maintain an optimal level of rivalry (or, in some versions, contestability) within markets.[4] The aim of what we may call 'competitiveness policy', by contrast, is the promotion of conditions which are conducive to the achievement of competitive advantage by particular firms and industries. While these two goals may well coincide in some respects, they are also likely to come into conflict at numerous points. This is because, in large part, they rest on different notions of the competitive process.

4 See Richard Whish, *Competition Law*, third edition (London: Butterworths, 1993), ch. 1.

According to the DTI's 1994 White Paper on *Competitiveness*, a firm or organization is competitive if it can meet 'customers' demands more efficiently and more effectively than other firms'.[5] This implies that a competitive firm is one which gains an advantage over its rivals through its superior capacity to adapt to a changing environment. Competitive strategies, therefore, involve a search for innovation in the use of technologies and in the design of processes and products through which firms seek to meet previously unsatisfied demands of consumers. The term 'innovation' can refer here either to incremental improvements or to the 'radical' adoption of completely new methods or techniques. Either way, the emphasis is on competition as a 'process of discovery' through which firms and organizations seek to capture supra-competitive 'rents' which last until such time as the practices or products which form the basis for their market advantage become more widely imitated or adopted by their rivals.

5 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win* (London: HMSO, 1994), p. 9.

In short, competitiveness policy is concerned with how far firms can survive and compete under rapidly changing conditions – that is, with their dynamic efficiency. By contrast, competition policy has traditionally focused on the achievement of static efficiency or the minimization of costs under conditions of known technologies and methods and stable patterns of demand.

Economists writing from the perspective of 'Austrian' economic theory have argued that by taking the perfectly competitive market as a benchmark, competition policy has provided a justification for forms of state intervention which properly have no place in a market-led economy. This occurs because

> [t]he extraordinarily demanding conditions required for perfectly competitive equilibrium render mainstream neo-classical economics not so much a body of market theory demonstrating the efficiency of real-world capitalism, as one demonstrating its departures from allocative efficiency. Vigorous anti-trust legislation and enforcement came, therefore, to be seen by defenders of the market economy steeped in the mainstream paradigm as steps urgently needed in order to defend the capitalist system against its otherwise non-competitive character.[6]

In a dynamic model of competition, antitrust interventions are seen as unnecessary since the process of competitive rivalry in itself contains the basis for incumbent firms to be challenged. Moreover, such interventions will be positively harmful in so far as they remove the opportunity to profit from returns to entrepreneurial discovery, which for this purpose include supra-competitive rents. From the point of view of this critique, the only legitimate role for government is to ensure that the relevant markets are open to entry. Since in practice the most significant barrier to entry is constituted by government activity in the form of grants and licences, 'the only government action needed to ensure the dynamically competitive character of market activity is to remove all such government-created obstacles'.[7]

From this perspective, competitiveness policy would be synonymous with deregulation of the kind which operated in British film policy in the mid 1980s. Deregulation includes, for this purpose, the scaling back of traditional antitrust or competition policy. The market process is seen as largely spontaneous or self-organizing, as long as it is left alone. However, an alternative point of view, while retaining the emphasis on the competition as a process, would see a role for government intervention in terms of promoting certain public or collective goods which the market process cannot be relied upon to provide by itself. This is the essence of the competitiveness policy which has gradually emerged in a number of countries over the past decade.

Central to this approach is the claim that the notion of competitiveness can be meaningfully applied to particular regions and states. Applying the idea of dynamic competition at a national level, the 1998 DTI White Paper argued that:

> in a global economy, technology spreads quickly and goods can be made in low cost countries and shipped to developed markets. British business therefore has to compete by exploiting capabilities which competitors find hard to imitate. The UK's distinctive

6 Israel Kirzner, *How Markets Work: Disequilibrium, Entrepreneurship and Discovery* (London: IEA, 1997), p. 59.

7 Ibid., pp. 61–2.

capabilities are not raw materials, land or cheap labour. They must be our knowledge, skills and creativity.[8]

On this basis, significant indicators of competitiveness include the trade balance and comparative measures of labour productivity and investment in research and development. The contribution of government lies in providing a combination of information, public investment, and the right incentive structure: 'the Government has a key role in acting as a catalyst, investor and regulator to strengthen the supply side of the economy'.

To this end, the 1998 White Paper proposed government action in three areas. Firstly, it argued that what it called 'capabilities' within firms would be enhanced by a number of measures, including investment in the science and engineering base and the provision of assistance to smaller firms in the adoption of information and communication technologies. Under this heading, entrepreneurial activity would be fostered by measures designed to increase the flow of venture capital to startups and by changes to insolvency law aimed at 'removing the stigma associated with business failure'. The use of the concept of 'capabilities' or 'competencies' in this context to describe sources of competitive advantage which depend upon aspects of economic organization (such as relations of close interdependence between buyer and supplier firms) echoes a substantial body of recent work in the economic theory of the firm and of the region.[9] Secondly, the White Paper called for a series of measures aimed at enhancing inter-organizational cooperation. These included the dissemination of standards of good practice in supplier relations and financial support from government for the development of local and regional 'clusters' of firms. Thirdly, the White Paper argued that changes to competition policy (mostly contained in the Competition Act 1998) would help to preserve 'open, transparent and effective markets' of the kind needed 'to encourage efficiency and innovation'.[10]

The overall philosophy of the 1998 White Paper is that the nation's competitive success is 'ultimately down to business' but that 'Government has a critical supporting role to play' in particular by 'making markets work better'.[11] There is no attempt to lay out, in a systematic fashion, a theory of when government intervention is and is not appropriate. Nor does the White Paper acknowledge that there might be contradictions between its policy of encouraging inter-firm collaboration, on the one hand, and its commitment to the strengthening of competition policy mechanisms on the other. However, for present purposes the most important aspect of the White Paper is its reassertion of the view that a 'competitive economy' at national level is, in itself, a type of public good which it is the government's responsibility to maintain. This theme has been consistently stressed throughout public policy pronouncements on competitiveness policy in the UK since the late 1980s.

8 Department of Trade and Industry, *Our Competitive Future. Building the Knowledge-Driven Economy*, Cm. 4176 (London: TSO, 1998), p. 6.

9 See Clive Lawson, 'Towards a competence theory of the region', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1999), pp. 151–66.

10 Department of Trade and Industry, *Our Competitive Future*, p. 51.

11 Ibid., p. 11.

Competitive firms and industries create spill-over effects in terms of higher living standards and opportunities for productive employment. Hence in the words of an earlier White Paper, citing the OECD, a particular region or country is competitive if it 'can, under free and fair market conditions, produce goods and services which meet the test of international markets, while simultaneously maintaining and expanding the incomes of its people over the long term'.[12]

Another aspect of competitiveness policy is that it may be invoked to serve ends other than the narrowly economic goals of improved living standards and enhanced opportunities for productive employment. Other goals, such as cultural diversity and expression, may be served by the preservation of an indigenous industry in a sector such as film production. Film is here perceived as a special case requiring unique treatment and support. This aspect of competitiveness policy keys into long-standing themes. It was suggested from the very inception of film policy in the UK (and in many other countries)[13] that the goals of cultural diversity and national self-expression would be served by the preservation of an indigenous film production sector. The perception that the large US studios were dominating the domestic market formed the basis for the quota system, guaranteeing a share of the domestic market to UK-based producers, which was introduced by the first major piece of film legislation, the Cinematograph Films Act 1927. The role of film policy in building a 'collective consciousness about nationhood' is itself 'complex and contentious',[14] in particular since it is far from clear that there is a such a thing as a single and unchanging national culture. However, proponents of 'a "national cinema" which is capable of registering the lived complexities of British "national life"' argue that such a goal cannot be realized in the absence of 'political and cultural support for film'.[15]

The language of recent public policy documents suggests that cultural justifications for film policy are increasingly viewed as part of the wider competitiveness policy. Hence the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, saw government as (amongst other things) 'playing its role in promoting creative industry exports, removing obstacles to free trade or opposing the introduction of measures which would harm the international competitiveness of UK companies and promoting an image of Britain as the creative and innovative hub of the world'.[16] In similar vein, *A Bigger Picture* argued that:

> The British film industry, in common with all our creative industries, has enormous potential. As recent successes show, our movies are capable, without compromising their individuality, of attracting huge audiences at home and abroad. These successes show that we have a real talent in this unique area where culture and commerce meet.[17]

12 Department of Trade and Industry, *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win*.

13 See Moran (ed.), *Film Policy*.

14 Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 1.

15 Hill, 'British film policy', pp. 111–12.

16 Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), *Creative Industries 1998 Mapping Document* (London: DCMS, 1998), p.10.

17 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, p. 3.

This approach implies, then, that the preservation of an active and independent British film industry can simultaneously meet two goals: the production of cultural goods which are, in some way, distinctively British; and the fostering of competitive advantage in an area (the 'creative industries') in which Britain is seen as having a natural (but as yet not fully realized) lead over other countries.

Assessing the competitiveness of the British film industry

This perspective on contemporary film policy helps explain the criteria against which current government policy has chosen to judge the 'competitiveness' of the British film industry.

Table 1[18] *– criteria for defining the competitiveness of the UK film industry*

Balance of external trade	The balance of trade in films has been consistently in surplus over the past decade. In 1996 there was a positive trade balance of £91m (exports of £522m and imports of £431m)
Number of UK films in production	116 films with a UK input were in production in 1997. On average there have been 80 such films in production each year during the 1990s. Equivalent figures are 43 per year in the 1980s, 81 in the 1970s, 99 in the 1960s, and 124 in the 1950s
Percentage of UK films given a theatrical release	Only 33% of UK-made films made in 1996 secured a theatrical release of some kind within a year of production. Equivalent figures are 48% for 1995, 76% for 1990 and 88% for 1985
Investment in UK film production	In terms of 1998 prices, total investment in UK-made films in 1997 was £581.9 million compared to £785 million in 1996, £271.8 million in 1990 and £455.3 million in 1985
Percentage of UK box office taken by UK films	Films with a UK input accounted for 27% of the UK box office takings in 1997. On a narrower definition which excludes certain UK-US co-productions, the figure for 1997 falls to 19.9% and for wholly UK-made films it is 8%

18 Source: Nick Thomas, 'UK film, television and video: overview', in *BFI Film and Television Handbook 1999* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).

Table 1 summarizes evidence on five of these: the balance of external trade in film; the number of UK films in production in a given year; the percentage of UK films securing a theatrical release within a year of production; the amount of money invested in UK film production; and the percentage of UK box-office receipts taken by UK-made films.

The balance of trade is a long-standing measure of the competitive success of an industry. In this regard, the recent performance of the British film industry seems to have been successful: as the *Mapping Document* states, '[o]ver the last ten years, the UK has consistently had a surplus in film'.[19] However, the positive trade balance is thought to be at least 'partially misleading' since, thanks to the dominance of distribution by US companies, 'most of the revenue from films made in the UK flows out of the country'.[20] Moreover, taking film and television production together, the UK had a trade deficit of £0.1 billion in 1997, with imports of £1.3 billion outweighing exports of £1.2 billion. The failure of the film industry surplus to grow more quickly in the mid 1990s during a period when television production went heavily into deficit thanks to an influx of US productions on satellite and cable television seems to have led to ministerial concern that 'such a key constituency of Britain's creative industries should be running a trade deficit',[21] and the DCMS commissioned an independent study which argued that weak export performance was in part the result of failures at the production stage, including excessive fragmentation of the independent film and television production sector.[22]

Other criteria listed in Table 1 are relevant to the issue of how far British-made films can compete with rival products in both domestic and overseas markets, but also relate to the question of how far a successful British film industry can meet other, cultural objectives. With regard to the volume of production, the 1998 *Mapping Document* claims that 'British film production is currently undergoing a renaissance'.[23] The number of British films in production was 116 in 1997 and 128 in 1996; both these figures reflect a considerable increase on the numbers being made as recently as 1992 (47), 1989 (30) and 1981 (31). However, closer inspection shows that numbers have fluctuated considerably from year to year since the early 1980s, and that on a ten-year basis there has been a steady decline from the postwar highs of the 1950s. Investment in film production has also seen wide fluctuations since the early 1980s, although it has increased most years since 1989 when, in constant prices, it was less than one fifth of the level of expenditure in 1996.[24]

Another perspective on the success of British films is the percentage of films which secure a theatrical release. In 1996, only 19% of British-made films secured a general release to 30 or more screens within a year of production and a further 14% were released in art house cinemas or on a limited West End showing. Fully 67%

19 *Creative Industries 1998 Mapping Document*, p. 51.

20 Ibid.

21 Chris Barrie, 'World faces British TV onslaught', *The Guardian*, 21 January 1999.

22 David Graham Associates, *Building a Global Audience. British Television in Overseas Markets* (London: DCMS, 1999).

23 *Creative Industries 1998 Mapping Document*, p. 50.

24 Thomas, 'UK film, television and video: overview'.

of British films made in this year had no public showing of any kind. This compares unfavourably with previous years (see Table 1). It has been argued that the performance of the industry is not as bad as these figures imply, since those films which never obtain a theatrical release are mainly low-budget, semi-professional productions.[25] Even allowing for this factor, however, there is evidence to suggest that the tail of under-competitive films is lengthening.

The share of UK box-office receipts taken by UK-made films has been a particular focus of policy since the Minister for Culture, Chris Smith, set a target rate of 20% in his speech outlining the new government's film policy in 1997 (the last year in which UK-made films took a higher percentage of the UK box office than American films was 1946). The extent to which British films meet this new target depends on how a UK-made film is defined. The 1998 *Mapping Document* quotes a figure of 19.9% of UK receipts taken by UK films in 1997, compared to 11.8% in 1996, 8.6% in 1995 and 8.8% in 1994. The basis for this estimate is not provided. Figures provided by the BFI and Screen Finance for 1997 give a somewhat different breakdown. Exclusively UK-financed films account for only 8.2% of total UK receipts, US–UK co-productions account for a further 16.22% and other UK co-productions for 2.66%.

These figures give some indication of the current competitive position of the UK film industry, the most salient feature of which is that the UK market itself continues to be dominated by Hollywood. Although the proportion of box office taken by American films has fallen since the early 1990s, the recent 'renaissance' of British film production owes much to a few spectacular commercial successes, most notably *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) and *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997) Even then, neither of these two films ranked in the top twenty in terms of worldwide box office for the year of release in question.

The precise meaning of a British-made film is also relevant to the question of how many films are in production in the UK. Of the 116 British films in production in 1997, only 65 were placed for official statistical purposes in 'category A', that is, 'films where the cultural and financial impetus is from the UK and the majority of personnel are British'. A further 15 films were in category B, that is, 'majority UK co-production films in which, although there are foreign partners, there is a UK cultural content and a significant amount of British finance and personnel', and 17 films in category C were minority UK co-productions not involving US finance. A further 19 of the total of 116 were 'American films with a UK creative and/or minor financial involvement'; these included some films with a mainly British cast (such as *Little Voice* [Mark Herman, 1998] and *Sliding Doors* [Peter Howitt, 1998]) but also films whose cultural content could not be thought of as distinctively British in any way but which made use of

25 Marc Samuelson, 'Lies, damn lies, and statistics', *PACT*, 1 October 1998, p. 7; Gavin Hamilton-Deeley, Roger Hussey, and Monika Sowinska, *The Cost of Making Dreams. Accounting for the British Film Industry* (London: Deloitte and Touche, 1999).

British studios and technical facilities. *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998), *Star Wars: Episode One* (George Lucas, 1999) and *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, 1998) were all counted as films produced in the UK on this basis.

If competitiveness were to be defined in purely commercial terms, this would not matter. The trade surplus in UK film production, as the *Mapping Document* recognizes, is partly the result of the large number of US–UK co-productions which are filmed in Britain. However, the use of the UK as a base for film production by the US majors does not address the need for what *A Bigger Picture* refers to as 'a self-sustaining commercial film industry' in Britain. Although that document maintains that 'specifically cultural objectives were outside the remit of the review' undertaken by the Film Policy Review Group, it also accepts that 'achieving our economic goal will lay the foundations of a healthy and diverse film culture, allowing a wide range of filmmaking, from the shoestring budget to the blockbuster, to flourish throughout the UK'.[26] The approach of *A Bigger Picture*, then, is to see economic and cultural goals as essentially complementary: the achievement of competitive survival and success for the British film industry is also the means by which the cultural goals of a 'national cinema' are to be met. On this basis, the positive trade balance is less important as an indicator of competitiveness than the small number of British films with substantial overseas takings, the relatively low share of the UK market taken by British-made films, and the difficulty many British filmmakers have in obtaining a theatrical release in the UK.

26 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, p. 10.

Can policy make a difference?

When we move from diagnosis to prescription, a powerful argument against the idea of competitiveness policy in this and related contexts has been mounted by critics who claim that government intervention faces fundamental informational problems in seeking to reproduce the conditions under which competitive advantage may emerge. Paul Krugman gives a number of reasons, which he considers to be 'essentially empirical rather than theoretical', for supposing that 'the theoretical possibilities for activism [are] virtually certain to do more harm than good'.[27] In particular, he maintains that it is extremely hard to translate the theoretical conditions for strategic trade policy into practical advice in the context of real-world industries and regions. His position is similar in essence to the 'Austrian' critique of state intervention to which we previously referred, namely that government is unable to collate and apply the information necessary for policy mechanisms to work: 'it is extremely hard to gain enough understanding of an imperfectly competitive industry to formulate an effective trade policy'.[28]

27 Paul Krugman,'Making sense of the competitiveness debate', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1996), pp. 17–24.

28 Ibid., p. 24.

We may agree that the formulation of an effective policy for promoting competitiveness depends on more than the identification of market failures, negative externalities and other barriers to growth within industries. It also presupposes that we understand the complex interrelationships between policy mechanisms, industry structures and economic outcomes. Is this, as the critics argue, an impossible task? A useful way into this debate is to use the concept of path dependence to explain the way in which the structure of an industry is shaped over time by institutional and organizational factors. This approach is of particular relevance to the film industry in Britain, since a widely held view is that the industry's lack of competitiveness is a consequence of its failure to reproduce the vertically integrated structures of the US majors.

The theory of path dependence holds that economic development is shaped by a society's institutional and organizational structures.[29] These structures possess a certain persistence and durability as a result of 'lock-in'. Lock-in can arise from the irreversible nature of initial investments and from 'feedback effects' or increasing returns which arise from the continuing use and reproduction of a particular technology, mode of organization, or system of institutional governance. The particular path which is taken by an economy may be determined by essentially contingent events or by the unpredictable effects of policy intervention at crucial junctures; once set along a certain path, however, the direction of economic change may not be reversible except at high cost.

29 For a summary and restatement of path dependence theory see Mark Roe,'Chaos and evolution in law and economics', *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 109, no. 3 (1996), pp. 641–68.

The implications of path dependence for competitiveness theory are ambiguous. An industry can be more or less competitive as a result of factors which are partly the result of historical accident (initial endowments) and partly the result of increasing returns once a particular pattern of economic development has been established. One view would be that there is little that policy alone can do to affect the relative competitiveness of firms and industries. Unless and until an external event or 'shock' disrupts the path of economic development, systems are more or less locked into their particular comparative advantages or disadvantages. Policy can reinforce an already existing tendency by identifying sources of comparative advantage and taking steps to safeguard and promote them, but otherwise its contribution is necessarily limited.

Another view, however, would emphasize that the position in which an industry or economy finds itself cannot be presumed to be efficient or optimal simply because that set of conditions has persisted through time. In a path-dependent world, there is no automatic movement towards efficiency, since the costs of undoing the effects of the past may outweigh (or be perceived to outweigh) the benefits of moving the economy towards a hypothetically more efficient state. Moreover, at any given time the competitive state of an industry is the result of factors which are heavily influenced by

the institutional framework. The persistence of inefficient or sub-optimal forms of economic organization may be the result of policy mistakes in the past, or the consequence of a failure to change policies which responded effectively to the needs of an earlier period but which are now irrelevant. Policy change may therefore have a significant impact upon the path of economic development (which is not the same as saying that the effects are predictable).

Path dependence in the film industry

Without increasing returns to technology or organizational form, economic change would be reversible and we would not expect economic development to be path dependent.[30] In the case of the film industry, there is strong evidence to suggest that both technology and organization can give rise to lock-in effects, and that the evolution of the industry in both the USA and Britain has been path dependent.

30 Brian Arthur, 'Competing technologies, increasing returns, and lock-in by historical events', *Economic Journal*, vol. 99, no. 394 (1989), pp. 116–31.

One particularly important aspect of economic organization in this context is the use of vertical integration as a means of sharing and spreading risk. The production of an individual film is by its nature a highly risky venture, in which it is generally impossible, in advance, to get a reliable estimate of the likely returns on investments. It is above all for this reason that the integration of film production with the two other elements of the process – distribution and exhibition, and in particular the former – is considered to have provided the US majors with a vital competitive advantage which the UK film industry has been unable to replicate. In the words of *A Bigger Picture*:

> The US industry is dominated by distribution-led, integrated structures, where the processes of development, production and distribution are financed and carried out by a single company. Such firms can use the revenues from distribution to finance production; they have the critical mass to attract finance; they are thus able to make big budget films, write off failures and build up a library of rights. By contrast, the UK industry is production-led and fragmented. The production process is separate from the distribution process which is dominated by big US companies. Production remains a 'cottage industry': most producers have no close relationship with a distributor, cannot easily reduce risk or raise finance by developing a slate of films, and have to sell their rights in order to get their films distributed.[31]

31 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, pp. 1–2.

The importance of risk in this context derives from the unpredictability which attaches to the process of assessing the commercial prospects for any individual film. A commercial return can only be obtained once a film is exhibited and, until that point is reached, it is not possible to predict with any certainty the returns

which a film may make. The key role of distribution derives in part from its pivotal, intermediate position in the chain of production and supply, linking together production and exhibition.[32] According to *A Bigger Picture*:

> while the costs of making a film are incurred at the development/production stage, revenues from exhibition do not arise until much later and accrue first to the distributor, who takes significant fees before the costs of the film are recouped and it goes into 'profit', which may not be until long after its first release. Only where there are close links between the two processes can this revenue stream be used to fund further production: distribution is in effect the engine which drives the process.[33]

However, this is not the full story. The importance of distribution is also the result of the way in which technological and institutional factors have interacted over time with the organization of the film industry to make the distributors best placed to manage the particular risks attached to film. The first successful, vertically integrated film company of the early years of the twentieth century was the French company Pathé Frères, but from the 1910s onwards the most rapid development came from the US majors, most of which began as exhibitors and only later moved into distribution and production. Hollywood's subsequent domination of the film industry has been ascribed to a number of factors, some of which can be considered as historically contingent. World War I stymied the development of European cinema at a time when the US industry was growing quickly. US production was solidly based on a large and growing domestic market which had no counterpart in other countries at this time, while, during the period of silent movies, language differences provided no barrier to the establishment by the US firms of an internationally saleable product.[34]

Once Hollywood's position was established, though, policy and strategy played a vital role in its consolidation. The Motion Picture Exporters Association acted in tandem with the US government in defence of the US film industry's interests. Examples of concerted action by the US majors included representations made to the UK government on film policy throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and the boycott of the UK market in 1947–8 in response to the short-lived Dalton levy on imported films which was designed to stem the outflow of dollars from the postwar British economy. The US majors achieved a quasi-monopoly position which made it difficult for external producers to break in.[35] The distributors were in a position not just to use revenues from the occasional successful film to cross-subsidize those which failed, but also to spread the risks of particular films failing by pre-selling packages of films to exhibitors through the practice of 'block selling'.

32 Moran (ed.), *Film Policy*.

33 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, pp. 13–14.

34 Ian Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: the North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

35 Harold Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*.

Since the 1950s, the US majors have reduced their dependence on cinema exhibition and diversified into a wide range of media outlets; by the mid 1990s the majors had 'consolidated their control over the value chain – from theatres, to video stores, to pay-television, the networks and cable'.[36] During this period Hollywood retained its dominance in overseas markets for feature films and extended its corporate reach into the markets for home-based entertainment. In 1993, for example, the US film industry generated a $4 billion surplus, second only to exports from the defence and aerospace industries in its contribution to US balance of payments. In 1986, the major studios received 65% of their revenues from the US market. By 1991, the US market accounted for 53.2% of revenues and foreign markets accounted for 46.8%.[37]

It is generally thought that the pattern of competitive advantage within cinema was set from an early stage. It has been argued that from as early as the 1920s, 'short of a collapse of the US industry, the prospects for its potential rivals were poor'.[38] The British film industry was doubly disadvantaged. Firstly, it had to compete with US dominance of the British market. The UK was Hollywood's largest export market between the 1920s and 1950s, and US distributors and exhibitors still occupy today a leading position in the UK market. This has attracted the attention of the UK competition authorities whose role, however, is confined to dealing with clear cases of abuse of market power; the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recently commented that 'we do not believe that the Hollywood studios or their UK affiliates have any public duty positively to facilitate the making or distribution of British films'.[39]

Secondly, the British film industry had to contend with the consequences of vertical separation at the level of economic organization. There were numerous attempts to achieve a degree of vertical integration which would allow the UK industry to compete more effectively, most notably by the Rank Organisation in the late 1930s and 1940s.[40] The encouragement of vertical integration as a response to a perceived crisis in the industry was tried again with Goldcrest in the 1980s and with Polygram in the 1990s.[41] In none of these cases did an independent, effective competitor emerge. Goldcrest, after some notable successes, almost went bankrupt in 1987 and ceased production shortly afterwards. The more successful Polygram was nevertheless taken over by the conglomerate Seagram in 1997 and later merged with the US major MCA in 1999.

Nor did film policy offer any answer during this period. For much of its history, British film policy has sought to promote an indigenous film industry through a mixture of 'protectionism and state oversight'.[42] The three main components of this approach were the system of statutory quotas, the National Film Finance Corporation, and the so-called Eady levy, none of which was effective in building competitive advantage to rival that of

36 Mike Dale, *The Movie Game. the Film Business in Britain, Europe and America* (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 26.

37 Tino Balio, '"A major presence in all the world's important markets": the globalization of Hollywood in the 1990s', in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998).

38 Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*, p. 93.

39 Monopolies and Mergers Commission, *Report on the Supply of Films for Exhibition in Cinemas in the UK* (London: HMSO, 1995), para. 2.211.

40 Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*, p. 103; McNab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry*.

41 John Eberts and Terry Ilott, *My Indecision is Final: the Rise and Fall of Goldcrest Films* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990); Angus Finney, *The State of European Cinema* (London: Cassell, 1996).

42 Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*, p. 106.

Hollywood. In the 1980s, this protective policy was finally abandoned as policy aimed at removing 'the paraphernalia of Government intervention'.[43] The NFFC, which gradually metamorphosed into British Screen, was given a more commercial remit with only limited financial support from government. The quota was first reduced and then abandoned from January 1983, and in 1985 the Eady levy was abolished. The problem with the levy was that the financial benefits (in the form of income recycled from exhibition) disproportionately went to the most successful producers, while the quota system was in effect unenforceable since insufficient British films were being made.[44] For a while, the industry was boosted by 100% capital allowances on film production, but these were phased out between 1984 and 1986 and, after a revival in production in the early 1980s, there was a further decline between 1988 and 1991. As a result, 'a hundred years after the birth of cinema, the [British] production sector [had] practically returned to its original cottage industry structure'.[45]

Whereas US film policy reinforced Hollywood's dominance over many decades, in Britain, by contrast, policy succeeded simply in cementing in place an inefficient industrial structure. This is the first lesson to be drawn from a path-dependent perspective. One reason for the failure of British policy was that it sought to compete with Hollywood from scratch by mimicking what were seen as American strengths, when the sources of Hollywood's competitive advantage were not reproducible outside the particular context in which they developed.

The second lesson, however, is that institutional structures are not locked in for good. To accept such a view would involve moving from the realization that the past is ever-present to the unwarranted assertion that it is all-determining. Even where a course of development appears to proceed unabated, the potential for radical redirection may be present and liable to be triggered at any time.[46] Indeed, the pattern of US advantage has shifted over time. The US majors have retained their competitive lead while effectively reinventing themselves as vertically-integrated, multimedia organizations, whose size and ability to diversify makes them capable of responding quickly to changes in technology and consumer demand. At the same time, the majors have also been able to exploit the opportunities offered to them by the emergence of a sizeable independent production sector in the US. Thus it is by no means the case that US film production is fully integrated with distribution. Where there is vertical separation, however, profit-sharing contracts and other risk-sharing devices have long been used to avert some of the negative effects which are associated with the fragmentation of the British film industry.[47]

It can be argued that Hollywood's continuing success is simply the result of the long tradition of US dominance of the film industry.

43 Hill,'British film policy', p. 102; see also John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch. 1.

44 Hill, 'British film policy'.

45 Street, *British National Cinema*, p. 23.

46 See Tony Lawson, *Economics and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 251.

47 On their use in Hollywood see Mark Weinstein, 'Profit-sharing contracts in Hollywood: evolution and analysis', *Journal of Legal Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1998), pp. 67–112.

However, the transformations which have occurred in the industry since the late 1950s and the changing nature of the large US corporations themselves suggest there was nothing predetermined or inevitable about the reproduction of American competitive advantage. Conversely, it would be wrong to suppose that the circumstances will not arise in which the British film industry can enhance its own competitiveness.

A path-dependent perspective implies, in our view, that policies and strategies can indeed be formulated with the objective of enhancing the competitiveness of the British film industry, as long as they have the correct focus. This means, above all, identifying those 'capabilities', or non-reproducible forms of competitive advantage, which are distinctive to British film, rather than seeking to emulate the successes of rival structures which emerged under very different conditions.

Restructuring the British film industry

The new film policy has many diverse elements, a full consideration of which lies beyond the scope of the present article; we wish here to focus on one particular aspect, namely the implications for the chain of production and supply of the film franchises set up in 1997 by the Arts Council of England. The recipients of Arts Council funding were Pathé Production with £33 million, The Film Consortium with £30.25 million and DNA Film Production Ltd with £29 million. The franchises were expected to produce between them over ninety British films in the six-year period for which they would operate, with a total investment of £460 million. Funding from the National Lottery was to represent 20% of the total investment.

Do the film franchises offer a new perspective on the key issue of vertical integration versus disintegration? To address this question, we must first consider the significance of moves towards closer cooperation between producers and sources of finance which have been occurring alongside the initiatives put in place by government.

As we have seen, the disadvantages of independent production include the absence of a reliable income stream, which makes it difficult to control the risks of individual films failing; lack of the resources needed to mount large-scale productions; and inability to retain control over the intellectual property rights to productions in such a way as to build up a long-term income stream based on the exploitation of films through the video and television markets.[48] According to an independent producer we interviewed in the summer of 1998, most UK production companies have weak balance sheets and no security of revenue, the result of being largely dependent on project-specific funding. Only a few of the larger and more successful producers are able to retain some control over intellectual property rights and to keep up a regular output of films.

48 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, p. 14.

Vertical disintegration and the perceived adverse effects of US dominance of distribution have greatly complicated the process of financing UK-made films. In addition, the growing importance of television-based financing (principally from Channel Four, but also from the BBC and certain ITV companies) has had mixed effects. Some see television as film's 'treacherous ally' which has promoted cultural diversity at the expense of smaller budgets and a focus on appealing to niche audiences, thereby reducing 'the commercial and creative ambitions of European cinema'.[49] The cumulative effect of these influences upon the situation facing UK film producers at the start of the 1990s was described by European Filmfile as follows:

> Since companies such as Rank, Thorn EMI and Handmade stopped producing films directly, no company in the UK has operated on a sufficiently large scale to finance the production of features without outside money. The UK can be described as a nation of small producers each producing few films, with no powerful integrated companies as in most other big European countries. As a result, the role of UK producers is rather different from that of their counterparts in the rest of Europe. Rather than finding one source which can majority back a project, the UK producer is forced to assemble a web of sources, resulting in a more complicated pattern of financing than elsewhere.[50]

Indeed, one film producer reported to us that no fewer than sixteen separate sources of finance had to be accessed in order for one of her projects to be produced.

One response to this problem has been a certain degree of innovation in terms of contractual cooperation between producers and providers of finance. Over the last ten years, relationships have developed between independent production companies and distributors which have been variously referred to as first-look deals, housekeeping deals, umbrella deals, overhead deals and output deals. As we noted earlier, profit-sharing contracts have a long history in the media industries,[51] and these new arrangements borrow to a certain extent from relations between independent producers and distributors in the US context, while also introducing some distinctive and novel elements.

In the case of a housekeeping or first-look deal, a producer signs up with a distributor or other financier on an exclusive basis for a particular period (three years is normal). The distributor provides financial support for overheads and development for a series of films, in return for being given the exclusive right to be the first to distribute the product. In most cases the distributor is given some say in which films get made. An output deal is somewhat looser. Here the distributor contracts to obtain the distribution rights for a particular territory in return for a financial contribution which is expressed as a certain percentage of the overall budget.[52]

49 Terry Ilott, *Budgets and Markets: a Study of the Budgeting of European Films* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 31; for a different view see John Hill: 'British television and film: the making of a relationship', in John Hill and Martin McLoone (eds), *Big Picture, Small Screen: the Relations Between Film and Television* (Luton: Luton University Press, 1996), pp. 171–2.

50 Quoted in Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, p. 51.

51 Weinstein,'Profit-sharing contracts in Hollywood'.

52 For further details see Finney, *The State of European Cinema*, pp. 62–3.

Some producers perceive the development of these relationships to be of key strategic importance:

> Currently in the UK there are probably ten or twelve producers and production companies that have overhead and umbrella deals. That's new. It's very exciting, very hopeful. Five, six, seven years ago . . . independent producers . . . were all truly independent. They didn't have any overhead deals; they were relying on development money from British Screen and Channel 4. . . . Now you have a group of producers . . . who all have the capacity to decide what they want to develop and when. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. I mean, if their films turn out to be films that people want to go and see, the overhead deals will have been worthwhile for these companies.[53]

Increasing use is also being made of highly-complex, three-way arrangements between producers, distributors and banks. These contracts are potentially highly risky for the banks, which may find themselves with individual films that do not recoup their costs. Various devices have been used to address this risk.[54] In a discounting distribution advance agreement, the bank aims to protect itself by contracting to receive from the producer a certain percentage of the advances paid over by the distributor. In addition, the bank may seek a completion guarantee, which will ensure that any cost overruns on the completion of films are met; specialized organizations exist to offer this service. Alternatively, insurance arrangements can be made for covering the risk that future revenues will not materialize (insured gap financing). In general, bank lending is conditional upon the producer giving up in advance future rights to the exploitation of the film. Whether producers are able to retain intellectual property rights, and whether they are able to command a particular percentage of the receipts as their fee, depends almost entirely upon their established track record and reputation.

The advantages of such arrangements for the producers include the long-term perspective which they encourage by providing funding for research and development, and the attenuation of risk which comes from a higher degree of financial security. In some cases, the process of hiring actors and directors in advance is facilitated. The principal disadvantage for the producer is that 'even with the deal, you are still on the hook' – the distributor still has the right not to take the product. Equally, the element of exclusivity can tie the producer into a deal which may become unattractive if the management of the distributor changes or their policy alters in mid contract.

Thus while many producers are actively seeking out opportunities for first-look deals and similar contractual arrangements, these contracts do not completely avoid the problems of risk management which small-scale producers face. Contractual arrangements of this type offer a particular kind of solution to the problem of risk

53 Trijbits quoted in Graham Jones and Lucy Johnson, *Talking Pictures: Interviews with Contemporary British Film-makers* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), p. 6.

54 Hamilton-Deely et al., *The Cost of Making Dreams.*

management, one which of necessity is driven by commercial imperatives, but which may nevertheless allow for greater planning by producers. How do these techniques compare to those implied by the emerging model of the film production franchises?

Some commentators have seen the new film production franchises as an important response to the fragmented nature of UK production. Thus Thomas writes:

> One welcome development in 1997 was the setting up of the three commercial film franchises comprising some of the most talented and experienced producers in the UK. . . . A move away from the project-by-project cottage industry approach that has characterised the UK production sector in recent years is a step in the right direction. Indeed the whole process of tendering for these franchises created a number of alliances between UK producers which bodes well for the future. In order for the UK to compete both at home and abroad, the evidence suggests we need fewer, better films. And to make them, we need fewer, better production entities.[55]

55 Thomas, 'UK film, television and video', p. 28.

Two views of the film production franchises have emerged in the short time since they were set up. On the one hand, they can be seen as an attempt to address the move towards vertical disintegration, by providing a support for a sustainable production sector.[56] The film franchises hold out the prospect that producers can obtain a degree of security within the framework of franchise funding, without being required to give up their autonomy. One producer involved in one of the successful franchise consortia described to us how the franchise had 'stimulated the range of filmmaking possibilities', facilitated larger budgets, and allowed 'room to fail and reap the benefits from success'. The franchise had engendered 'a shift in the balance of power' between producers and distributors.

56 Ibid.

A more critical view, which addresses directly the issue of economic organization discussed above, is that the stress on production in the film franchise structure is misplaced; policy should have been focused instead on the linkages between production and distribution. To some extent this objection would be met by implementation of a proposal put forward in *A Bigger Picture* for financial support for the distribution of British-made films. The report argued that the franchises should '[broaden] their support to the development and distribution processes as well as production', and that National Lottery funding should be used to support a scheme 'to support the distribution of qualifying films' under which state support would 'help distributors to invest more in prints and advertising for British films and encourage all distributors, including the US majors, to distribute more British films'.[57] It has also been suggested that public funding should be focused on the development of a set of specialized cinema exhibition franchises which would 'parallel the

57 *A Bigger Picture*, p. 19.

multiplex explosion of the eighties and build a complementary network of specialised cinemas across the UK'.[58]

A full evaluation of the film franchises in this early stage of their development would be premature. What is of interest, at this point, is what they say about the continuities and discontinuities in film policy. At one level, policy could be viewed as attempting to create vertically-integrated structures in imitation of the US majors, an approach which, as we have seen, has repeatedly failed to produce the desired results in the different British context. At another level, the film consortia can be seen as a distinctive and novel response to the need to nurture a viable and active independent production sector in Britain. From this latter point of view, it is the advantages, rather than the disadvantages, of the prevailing mode of British film production which need to be stressed, namely the space it provides for cultural diversity and creative autonomy for filmmakers.

58 Steve McIntyre, 'The Lottery: where will all the money go?', *Vertigo*, no. 7 (1997), p. 4.

Conclusion

Sally Hibbin has argued that the success of British film production 'has always come from being production led, from making films that people are passionate to make, not products designed to gain the largest audience figures', and that 'where we stumble is when we start to believe that we can emulate [American] films'.[59] Her argument poses two challenges to the new film policy: firstly, it points up the dangers of subordinating production to distribution, and, secondly, it implies that the pursuit of competitiveness may occur at the expense of the distinctive cultural identity of British film.

59 Sally Hibbin, 'Britain has a new film establishment', p. 41.

With regard to the first point, the argument which we have developed in this paper would suggest that attempts to mimic the structures of the US industry would, indeed, fail to deliver the goals of the new film policy, just as they have done in the past. The economics of path dependence tells us that it is not possible to recreate in any meaningful sense the conditions under which the large, vertically-integrated US majors first emerged, and then later reconstituted themselves in such a way as to achieve competitive superiority in international markets.

However, in the context of the second point, we have also argued that the economic and cultural objectives of film policy need not be opposed to one another, if that policy is properly focused. The role of policy should be to encourage the exploitation of those distinctive capabilities upon which competitive advantage rests. In this context, it needs to be recognized that the disintegrated structure of British film production, although in the past perceived to be a source of competitive weakness, also offers certain important advantages in terms of cultural diversity and creative autonomy. New forms of risk

management, which shelter independent producers while also seeking to preserve their autonomy, may provide policymakers with a useful alternative model to that of vertical re-integration. In particular, the development of first-look and housekeeping deals has recently highlighted the importance of cooperative relations within the chain of production and supply in providing the stability which British producers need to compete effectively. The new film policy could look to some of these practices, which have been developing within the commercial sector, in seeking to strike an appropriate balance between cooperation and competition, not least in the context of the film production franchises. The success of film policy in promoting organizational innovations of this kind will show whether, in a wider context, competitiveness policy can succeed in its goal of moving the market 'in the right direction'.[60]

60 *A Bigger Picture*, p. 18.

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reports

Latin American Cinema Conference: Theory and Praxis, University of Leeds, 29–30 June 1999

Some ten years ago – certainly when I was an undergraduate – the curriculum in UK departments of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies was dominated by literary study. Non-literary options tended to be limited to courses in linguistics or history. Things, however, have changed radically since then. Thanks in part to advances in video technology, and thanks also to a more widespread questioning of the canon and its values which has happened in the wake of the institutionalization of feminist theory and Cultural Studies, the range of what now constitutes a legitimate object of study in Modern Language degrees has been considerably broadened. These days, the most popular undergraduate courses are without a doubt those that have reflected this paradigm shift. Film courses are now the most heavily subscribed courses on offer on the Modern Language syllabus.

As a result of this sea-change, there are now many younger academics teaching and researching film in such departments, and a whole generation of graduate students with undergraduate experience of film now working on cinema-related PhDs. Of those who attended the recent Latin American Cinema: Theory and Praxis conference, many were based in Modern Language departments. This extremely friendly and well-organized conference was hosted by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Leeds. The conference was awarded research grants by the University of Leeds and the British Academy and was attended by approximately forty people, of whom fifteen gave papers. Like many Modern Language departments across the UK, the Leeds Spanish and Portuguese undergraduate degree incorporates substantial elements of film into the syllabus. The Leeds department is, furthermore, in the enviable position of having several members of staff actively researching and teaching in the field of Latin American film studies. Leeds, then, was an appropriate venue for what was, as far as I am aware, only the second or third UK conference of its kind in the 1990s dedicated solely to Latin American cinema.

That Latin American cinema is now able to sustain its own conference circuit (breaking away from the panel format within, for example, larger Hispanic/Latin American Studies conferences) would seem to suggest that it is on the up and up in the UK, not only in Modern Languages, but also in departments and schools of Media, Film and Communications Studies. (In fact, chatting to other delegates, I discovered a few who were attending precisely because they were keen to develop Latin American film options within their home institutions.) The fledgling autonomy of the discipline within the UK is due in large measure to the pioneering work of scholars like Michael Chanan – the keynote speaker at the conference – and John King, whose valuable and groundbreaking studies have opened up and mapped the terrain for current researchers in the field. (Chanan: *Chilean Cinema* [1976]; *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* [1983]; *The Cuban Image* [1985]. King: *Magical Reels: a History of Cinema in Latin America* [1995].)

If Latin American cinema is currently gaining critical autonomy within the UK academy, then Brazilian cinema has tended to be a neglected area in terms of both conferences and publications. With two of the organizers (Stephanie Dennison and Lisa Shaw) working within Brazilian Studies, this conference stood as a bold corrective to Brazil's marginalized status within Latin American film studies. Brazilian cinema very much took centre stage: three of the six 'theory' sessions were devoted to Brazilian topics and the international visiting speakers

(Randal Johnson, Lúcia Nagib, Fernão Ramos and Ismail Xavier) were all Brazilianists.

The organizing principle of the conference was the 'national cinemas' paradigm, and many of the papers were concerned with how genres, industries and individual films articulate the cultural traditions and values of the nations in question. In addition to the Brazilian strand, other 'theory' panels focused on what are effectively the continent's established cinemas: namely, those of Cuba, Mexico and the River Plate region. Indeed, when talking about 'Latin American' cinema, it is important to remember that one of the defining characteristics of the area's – and its nation-states' – production is uneven development. The issue of uneven development and cinema's relationship with the state was addressed explicitly in a number of papers that explored the question of cinema's industrial base across the subcontinent and also reflected in the 'praxis' element of the conference's title.

'Praxis' took the form of a screening of Ecuadorian director, Camilo Luzuriaga's *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* (1996), based on the 1974 novel of the same title by fellow Ecuadorian Jorge Enrique Adoum. Set in the 1960s, Luzuriaga's film deals with the increasingly violent schisms in the Left of this period. Taking Latin American cinema as a whole, Ecuador's stake in the continental industry is tiny. To give an example, the chapter on Andean cinema in King's *Magical Reels*, which focuses primarily on Peru and to a lesser extent on Bolivia, includes a mere paragraph on Ecuador. And, as Keith Richards underscored in his contextualizing foreword to *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*, given the fledgling status of the national industry, Luzuriaga has become virtually synonymous with Ecuadorian cinema in the 1990s. *Entre Marx* was also preceded by a brief introduction from the director's brother and composer of the film score, Diego Luzuriaga, who gave an informal and entertaining talk about his role in the making of the music for the film. He comically highlighted his first-hand experience of the difficulties of film production under tight economic constraints. This was an extremely enjoyable part of the conference and, certainly for me, it was an interesting and valuable experience to have the musical score foregrounded, an element of film that can so easily fade into inaudibility in critical work.

From theory to praxis, and from Ecuador through Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico and Uruguay, the focus of the papers presented at the conference was extremely wide-ranging. What, then, could they be said to have in common? I would reiterate that if there was one overarching theme that informed the approaches to the cinemas/films under discussion it was the national cinemas paradigm. This approach has been characterized by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in their indispensable book *Unthinking Eurocentricism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994).

In a chapter on the 'Third Worldist film' they argue that

> Any serious discussion of Third World cinema must engage the complex question of the 'national'. As the products of national industries, produced in national languages, portraying national situations and recycling national intertexts (literatures, folklores), all films are of course national, just as all films . . . project national imaginaries. But if First World filmmakers seem to float 'above' petty nationalist concerns, it is because they take for granted the projection of a national power that facilitates the making and dissemination of their films. Third World filmmakers, on the other hand, cannot assume a substratum of national power. (p. 285.)

Interestingly, none of the papers explicitly addressed the status of 'Third Cinema' nor indeed the 'national' as theoretical constructs; the 'Third' and 'national' question tended to

remain an important but, on the whole, implicit subtext in many discussions. Nevertheless, many of the papers were underpinned by a sense of Third Worldist film and engaged the complex question of the national. Notions of 'the national' varied – from the development of national industries in relation to internal state policy and in relation to the external forces of the global market (particularly, of course, Hollywood), through the historical, cultural and literary factors that shape cinematic cultures – nevertheless, almost without exception, some notion of the specific national context in which film texts and industries are constructed was present in the analysis.

The keynote paper delivered by Chanan clearly set the tone. Based on the introduction to a forthcoming new edition of *The Cuban Image*, Chanan's paper focused on the industrial context of Cuban cinema and its relationship to the Cuban state. Under the title 'Cuban Cinema Forty Years On', Chanan focused on the erratic nature of Cuban cinema in the 1990s, arguing that cinema continues to be a highly charged issue, one which throws into perspective the history of Cuban cinema since the Revolution. Other papers in the session on Cuban cinema foregrounded issues of gender and class, exploring the contradictions inherent in the 'machismo' of the Revolutionary project as reflected in Cuban film.

Gender and class matters developed into a thematic thread that ran fairly constantly through the conference, opening up to include issues of race and sexuality, particularly in the Brazilian strand. A number of papers in the sessions that made up this strand explored the intersections of racial, (hetero)sexual and national screen identities, often locating these within the context of a discussion of how Brazilian cinema negotiates an 'authentic' cinematic status for itself in the face of the hegemonic grip of Hollywood cinema. Screen adaptations and remakes were another factor that linked papers in these sessions. Here it was refreshing to see how intertextuality was approached with sophistication and nuance, avoiding the reductive treatment that literature-into-film analysis can often elicit, focusing instead on theoretically informed elements of subversion, parody and carnival. Intertextuality was also a theme developed in the Mexican and River Plate sessions, with papers on generic borrowings and the textual politics of international coproductions.

All in all, the conference turned out to be a very stimulating and engaging two days. It was a great opportunity to discuss with others in the field not only the academic side of things but also the practicalities of working on Latin American film. One of the major obstacles to working on the subcontinent's cinema is the tricky question of resources and contact with the object of study: How do researchers based in the UK keep up to date with the latest developments and releases in Latin America? How do colleagues get hold of material, particularly, of course, videos? What kinds of institutional support do colleagues receive? Given that the study of Latin American cinema is still in its infancy in the UK, some of these questions remain to be resolved, but things are certainly developing quickly.

This for me, however, raises a final question: will the increase in UK-based research on Latin American cinema take on board at some stage the important developments that have taken place within Film Studies over the last thirty years? At this conference the kinds of theoretical and methodological insights into the study of film that have emerged in Film Studies 'proper' were curiously conspicuous by their absence. Where was the spectator? Where was the close formal analysis of the film text? Not really at Leeds. There are undoubtedly some very good reasons for this. As noted, these are changing times in 'Hispanic Studies' as a discipline, but interdisciplinarity takes time. Perhaps as the study of Latin American cinema becomes more established, the

excellent work on the sociocultural, historical, industrial and political aspects of film that is well established within Modern Languages will be complemented by an increasing awareness of the on-going debates within Film Studies. At the same time, within Latin American Studies more generally, there is a well-founded resistance to the wholesale importation of 'foreign' theoretical and methodological baggage. With the study of film, the challenge will be not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

There are surely a number of constants that influence the cinematic experience and film meaning the world over: screen–spectator relationships, the whole 'audiovisual' dimension of the film text, and so on. Perhaps it is time for those of us engaged in the study of Latin American film to direct our gaze towards this important and potentially useful body of work, and to adapt and transform it in the light of the social and cultural milieux that are very much the object of our study?

Andrea Noble

Screen Studies Conference, University of Glasgow, 2–4 July 1999

It seems a little sad to say that coming to *Screen* was something of a holiday. But when one is in the final stages of completing a thesis, anywhere where everyone else does the work seems like an escape. Like holidays, conferences can be either disappointing or energizing; this year *Screen* tended towards the latter.

The opening plenary session on early cinema was a particularly good start. The speakers (Lee Grieveson, Shelley Stamp and Kristen Whissel) presented a variety of perspectives on early film cultures between 1907 and the 1910s, ranging across textual readings and discussions of film audiences, both in relationship to the address of contemporaneous films, and the gendered and class-based constructions of the social spaces of film theatres. The interplay between the papers, both in their presentation and in the subsequent discussion, revealed a concern with the ways in which film texts and the space of the film theatre were the site of complex transformations of the 'public sphere' of the cinemagoing audiences. In a symmetrical gesture, the conference closed with a plenary on the future of digital technologies and the visual image, which left open many questions about the future possibilities engendered by the transforming potential of electronic media.

If these plenaries signalled towards the past and future of Film and Television Studies, then the present was in the intervening multistranded sessions, which covered a large number of themes and approaches, including reception studies, reality television, Godard on the history of cinema, melodrama and nationality, sexuality and nationality, and performance. These concerns were mobilized through a wide variety of different cinemas: Hollywood, American Independents, British, Scottish, Welsh, Brazilian, Taiwanese, Bombay, Mexican, German, French, Korean, Hong Kong and 'European'. In the absence of the multiple perspectives available through new technologies a review such as this is only partial, limited by the singularity of the average human body. In consequence, I did not manage to attend any sessions on television, and their absence in this review, though unfortunate, is unavoidable.

Of the sessions that I did attend there seemed to be a loose emphasis on two elements, those of performance and space. At last year's *Screen* Conference there was the suggestion that no-one was thinking about performance; this year several papers offered a corrective to this assertion. Moving from acting, stars and performance to performativity, the relationship between narrative meaning(s) and the performances of the actors in central roles was addressed. Drawing on the notion of stardom, Peter

excellent work on the sociocultural, historical, industrial and political aspects of film that is well established within Modern Languages will be complemented by an increasing awareness of the on-going debates within Film Studies. At the same time, within Latin American Studies more generally, there is a well-founded resistance to the wholesale importation of 'foreign' theoretical and methodological baggage. With the study of film, the challenge will be not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

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Of the sessions that I did attend there seemed to be a loose emphasis on two elements, those of performance and space. At last year's *Screen* Conference there was the suggestion that no-one was thinking about performance; this year several papers offered a corrective to this assertion. Moving from acting, stars and performance to performativity, the relationship between narrative meaning(s) and the performances of the actors in central roles was addressed. Drawing on the notion of stardom, Peter

Krämer's paper on Sandra Bullock mobilized the equation between star roles and the publicity surrounding the star, using this as a means of grounding the readings of her character-performance within a particular cultural–textual formation. A different argument was developed by Valerie Orpen to investigate the relationship between stars and editing. In her paper, the showcasing of the star performance was located, at least in part, within the editing strategies of a film. Other papers also suggested alternative ways of thinking about performance: using Jim Carrey as an example, Phil Drake argued that styles of comedic performance influence the expectation of the audience, displacing the primacy of the narrative as the site of organization of readings and meanings. As with the paper on editing, this suggests a conceptualization of the star through a performance that is understood as distanced, though not absolutely separable, from the more culturally embedded understanding of stardom. This distancing from culturally grounded readings was most evident in the discussion surrounding Catherine Constable's paper on *Face/Off*, a film in which each star performs each other's performance. Whilst these approaches are quite disparate, often with tensions between their differing positions, they display a welcome diversity of thinking around stars and performance.

Space was another element around which there was a set of disparate yet connected papers. An awareness of spatiality has always been a part of thinking about the image, but this constellation of approaches again suggests that space is a site currently opening up for debate. Examples of this included a discussion of the neobaroque, and an energetic commentary on the complex use of space both visually and aurally in films such as *Strange Days* and *Desperado*. Other papers addressed the relationship between space and constructions of identity, especially gendered national identities, through films using the theme of travel across national boundaries such as Britain and other European countries. The relationship between space and identity was also implicit in the papers on electronic media spaces. However, space here was utilized within a different strategy, conceptualized in terms of contingencies since it comes into being in the moment of interaction with the user. Also pertinent to this theme of space was a paper on aural spaces in *Illusions*, a relatively rare occurrence at the conference. Taken together these papers suggest that constructions of space are coming back into focus in studies of film, television and related media. Interestingly, some of the concerns central to these papers coincide with those of the emergent spatial theories from outside of these disciplines. Although these seemed rather absent from this conference, they could provide useful insights when thinking about the contingencies of spatial constructions of identities.

Theory more generally was of course evident in many papers, though more explicitly in some than others. The debt to psychoanalysis continues to accrue as constructions of racial, gendered and queered identities were explored through Freud, Lacan, Klein and Metz. The papers attempted, with varying degrees of conviction, to expand ways of thinking about spectatorship as well as narrative constructions. The themes in motion ranged from pleasure to unpleasure, and from melancholia and loss to friendship. Whilst some of this work, such as the idea of the unpleasure(s) of spectatorship, seems to be usefully addressing gaps in these approaches, in other instances psychoanalysis is used in over-familiar and often uninspiring ways.

Interestingly, there were also a number of papers mobilizing a diverse range of other theorists, including Deleuze, Bataille, Baudrillard, Butler and Lyotard, in a variety of ways, including performativity and industrial economies of Hollywood. Additionally, Deleuze and Lyotard were

utilized in papers which sought to address the specificity of film as a visual and aural space. Given the relatively early stages of these papers they were perhaps more encouraging in terms of their potential than their execution. But that said, they were valuable inclusions as they actively sought different ways of thinking about film and, relatedly, television and electronic media.

These attempts to find alternative strategies of theorizing space are essential in the current moment, when new technologies of image-making have the potential to expand the screen space as well as to alter narrative conventions. These changes have implications for how narrative space(s) can be thought about, and the effect that this will have on theories of spectatorship. At this *Screen* conference this potential for multiplicity was primarily linked to the electronic media. However, as several recent films have demonstrated, new technologies of filmmaking are expanding the screen space (visual and aural) in all sorts of fascinating ways. Hopefully, thinking about films, television and related media will also expand to meet this challenge.

Aylish Wood

review:

M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: a Historical Construction*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 268 pp.

LALITHA GOPALAN

As its title suggests, Madhava Prasad's book examines the ideology of the Hindi film narrative through a combination of Frankfurt School warnings on mass culture, Althusser's modulations on the state apparatus, and Jameson's contribution to the ideology of form. What obtains is a twinned history of the postcolonial Indian state and Hindi cinema.

The book is divided into two parts: the first half focuses on the 1950s and 1960s when, Prasad argues, the films relay the coalitional nature of the early postcolonial state (when landed elites exerted great influence over the direction of modernization) through a narrative form he identifies as the feudal family romance. The second half sketches the disaggregation of this form in subsequent decades. At the heart of the book are two chapters which splendidly engage with Marxism and psychoanalysis to deliver one of the most brilliant interventions in film theory using a national cinema other than Hollywood. In 'The absolutist gaze: political structure and culture form', Prasad argues that the feudal family romance allows us to chart the 'competing modes of film melodrama and realism' (p. 55) structuring the unwieldy organization of narrative elements in the Hindi film. Evaluating the various debates that have linked realism to democratic civil society, he suggests that the preferred model of realism for Hindi cinema is a linear narrative that attempts to subordinate the heterogeneous elements such as comedy tracks and song and dance sequences. Prasad is careful to remind us that this

thrust towards a democratic realism is never fully realized in Hindi films which, more often than not, run into a 'belligerently egalitarian feudalism' characterized by twists and turns in the narrative. Under these conditions, Prasad argues Hindi film produces a supergenre, which reasserts its dominance through narrative strategies of annexation whenever new subgenres emerge. Prasad refers to the fledgling feminine genre of the melodrama as a resistant tendency which the supergenre annexes to produce a more conventional representation of sexual difference.

In 'Guardians of the view: the prohibition of the private', Prasad turns to one of the most notorious characteristics of Indian cinema – the ban on kissing. Revisiting the received wisdom that kissing is 'western', Prasad argues that such a ban is also a prohibition of the private and, by extension, a prohibition of cinema. Rounding off the argument, Prasad reminds us how the implied prohibition of cinema and modernity disavows the capitalist nature of the state by displacing it on to a discourse on authentic traditional culture. In a playful postscript to the chapter, Prasad interrogates the familiar English expression 'I love you' that surfaces in Hindi films. This declaration of love, he suggests, creates a private space for the couple, but uttered in English it grants social privilege that flourishes in the domain of a modernizing nation-state.

The second half of the book examines three instances of 'disaggregation' of the supergenre heralded by the crisis of state legitimacy. Concentrating on movie star Amitabh Bachchan's films, Prasad argues that in *Zanjeer/The Chain* (Prakash Mehra, 1973), *Deewar/The Wall* (Yash Chopra, 1975), and *Sholay/Flames* (Ramesh Sippy, 1975) the narratives teeter between the 'semantic excess' of the star persona on the one hand, and the role of the subaltern hero who mobilizes the populist sentiments of the masses on the other, but finally the star serves as 'an agent of national reconciliation and social reform'. Tying Bachchan's stardom to those of the star scriptwriters Salim and Javed, Prasad hints at changes in the production conditions of the industry, but does not adequately develop the argument which may have substantiated his claim that 'the star remained a semantic excess of the narrative process, available for future exploitation' (p. 141). Instead of focusing on narrative themes in this chapter, it might have been worthwhile to see how the films domesticate the mobilization of subaltern possibilities through spectacular slow-motion shots, fetishization of the star body through extreme closeups, or even use the soundtrack to amplify the star image. Attending to filmic details would have greatly strengthened Prasad's argument that the Bachchan phenomenon signals the arrival of populism in the national arena.

A second assault on the supergenre is directly engineered by the state by floating the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) in 1969. Prasad suggests that the FFC's commitment to realism, in principle, drew

from both the progressive form available in K.A. Abbas's and Bimal Roy's films in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as Satyajit Ray's aesthetic project of realism ensconced within Nehruvian ideals of nation-building. However, Prasad suggests that political imperatives precipitated the emergence of two distinct strands of realism in FFC productions which, although divergent in their purpose, addressed different interests of the citizen-subject. The first was 'new wave cinema', heralded by *Bhuvan Shome* (Mrinal Sen, 1969), which sought to counter narrative cinema and, in the process, drew attention to the nation-state's investment with realism. Clearly, if Prasad had fully developed this insight we should have been privy to readings of avant-garde filmmakers such as Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahini, who unfortunately merit only a fleeting mention in this book. Instead Prasad reserves his critical ammunition for the second strand of realism that obtains in middle-class cinema where the focus is on the trials and tribulations of individual protagonists.

Within middle-class cinema, Prasad remarks on two broad 'sectors': one places the middle class in a national arena as a hegemonic class that seals national identity and diffuses class conflict. Here, Prasad cites Gulzar's *Mere Apne/My dear ones* (1971), and Hrishikesh Mukerjee's *Anand* (1971) and *Namak Haram/Traitor* (1973) as examples of films that draw our attention to social issues which are finally resolved by aesthetic and affective, instead of political, means. The second sector reflects on the consolidation of the middle-class identity and is further divided into three subtypes. In the first we find films preoccupied with external intrusions such as the lure of films threatening class reproduction; Prasad chooses *Guddi* (Hrishikesh Mukerjee, 1971) and *Rajnigandha/Tuberose* (Basu Chatterjee, 1974) to demonstrate how desires of female protagonists upset the patriarchal equilibrium of the middle class. In the second subtype, marital conflict over career ambitions is central to the narrative, as in *Abhiman/Pride* (Hrishikesh Mukerjee, 1973) and *Aandhi/The storm* (Gulzar, 1975). The last subtype explores the construction of class space as a condition of bourgeois subjectivity. Prasad proceeds to offer a fine reading of Rajinder Singh Bedi's *Dastak/The Knock* (1970) by guiding us through the film's complicated structure of voyeurism, which includes the formation of the film spectator as a bourgeois subject obsessed with privacy. Prasad's astute reading of *Dastak* more than compensates for the flat plot summaries of the first two subtypes.

In the following chapter Prasad charts a different trajectory of state-supported realism by providing us a fabulous, and long overdue, analysis of Shyam Benegal's first three films – *Ankur/The Seedling* (1974), *Nishant/Night's End* (1975), and *Manthan/The Churning* (1976). He argues that, unlike the realism of Kannada cinema which fostered regional identities, Benegal's films successfully managed to bridge the gap between regional and national by resorting to

variations of Hindi, a scriptwriting strategy that produced 'statist realism' or a 'developmental aesthetic' which guaranteed that the 'legal citizen-subject of the modern capitalist state is its only possible addressee'. The full weight of these suggestions is present in Prasad's readings of the final scenes of both *Ankur* and *Nishant* – films set in colonial India and hence far removed from the postcolonial state's complicity with feudal interests. Rejecting previous readings that see the endings of these films as being clumsily tagged on, Prasad reads them as proffering spectacles of rebellion without upsetting our voyeuristic interests in the feudal mise-en-scene and, in the process, reinstating the modern nation-state as the only viable option. Set in postcolonial India, *Manthan* directly addresses the relationship among feudal interests, the state and the rural poor, and here too Prasad finds revolutionary alternatives blunted, this time by a good bureaucrat who stands in for the interventionist state. Configured in different ways, the 'developmental aesthetic' in these films bolsters a reformist, rather than radical, agenda. There is no doubt that the fine readings of Benegal's films in this chapter neatly fit Prasad's theoretical framework that attempts to link the interests of the state with those of Hindi cinema, a coincidence not easily available in his readings of other films.

The final chapter of the book returns to the concerns of the first half by providing us with close readings of two films – *Roja* (Mani Rathnam, 1992) and *Damini* (Rajkumar Santhoshi, 1993) – which have no obvious intertextual relationship to each other, but which strangely rehearse a similar problem. In both films the opening sequence, which Prasad identifies as fragment B, threatens the stability of the heterosexual couple in a pastoral space, through a temporal precedence in the narrative. Prasad suggests that unlike the heterogeneous narrative of previous years, these two films mask the disruptions of the double narrative by threading the two together but not without 'robbing the pastoral discourse of its fullness and self-identity' (p. 235). Prasad warns us against viewing the unveiling of this enforced stability of the heterosexual couple as narrative reform, rather, he argues, there is 'supreme ideological reassurance: that there is an Other who directs the unfolding of the new order. . . . The Other in whom we trust when we trust in capitalism' (p. 236). Although this closing claim is not fully substantiated, Prasad's provocative insight will surely govern future work on contemporary Indian films.

The theoretical and methodological innovations in this book overshadow previous work on Indian cinema and invites readers working on state theory, cultural studies and, of course, film theory. At times, the critical and broad-based address of the book acts as a handicap: since the book is keen on charting the twin histories of the nation-state and Hindi cinema, in that particular order, it often runs the risk of privileging the workings of state ideology over filmic

details. For instance, each chapter begins with a discussion of state ideology before proceeding to the films, a stylistic device which also has methodological and theoretical repercussions for this project: films follow the state. It would have been interesting to see how films govern state ideology, or even how they feed off each other, as suggested in Prasad's reading of Benegal's films. A related issue arises from the book's facility with both psychoanalysis and Marxism: the absence of pleasure. All too often the spectator's relationship to the state and screen is cast in rational overtones that preclude attending to the contradictory routes of pleasure. These reservations in no way undercut Prasad's brilliant book, only demand the strengthening of its theoretical edifice.

review:

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Steven Ricci (eds), *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity 1946–95*. London: British Film Institute, 1998, 164 pp.

JOHN HILL

There has been a growth in books on the cinema and Europe in recent years.[1] The background to this development is fairly clear. Although cinema attendances in certain European countries have been rising, levels of attendance are still a fraction of those before 1960. Moreover, such audience growth as there is has been largely stimulated by the popularity of Hollywood blockbusters. Thus, in 1998, in the wake of the success of *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), only 15% of European box office went to local films.[2] Hollywood's domination of European markets is, of course, longstanding and stretches back to at least the end of World War I. What is new, however, is the way that the contraction of domestic markets in Europe, combined with the overwhelming strength of Hollywood's current position, has threatened the economic viability of even the largest of European film industries.

Although motivated by these contemporary concerns, *Hollywood and Europe* is largely historical in character, delineating some of the ways in which the relationships between Hollywood and Europe have developed. In this respect it follows in the steps of a number of other works by seeking to uncover the historical roots of Hollywood's commanding position in Europe and the responses this state of affairs has generated.[3] Thus, Ian Jarvie traces the ways in which Hollywood has extended its control over European markets since the 1920s, while Jean-Pierre Jeancolas examines French

1 See, for example John Hill, Martin McLoone and Paul Hainsworth (eds), *Border Crossing: Film in Ireland, Britain and Europe* (Belfast and London: Institute of Irish Studies and British Film Institute, 1994); Wendy Everett (ed.), *European Identity in Cinema* (Exeter: Intellect Books, 1996); Angus Finney, *The State of European Cinema* (London: Cassell, 1996); Martin Dale, *The Movie Game: Film in Britain, Europe and America* (London: Cassell, 1997).

2 'Local film share down in most markets', *Screen Digest* (July 1999), p. 173.

3 See, for example Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907–1934* (London: British Film Institute, 1985); Ian Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: the North Atlantic Movie Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (eds), *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994).

reactions – from the Blum-Byrnes Agreement to the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) talks – to the postwar spread of Hollywood films. Christopher Wagstaffe discusses how the Italian film industry of the 1960s sought to overcome its economic problems by producing popular genre films (such as spaghetti Westerns) for export, while Tino Balio rather gloomily charts the ways in which the Hollywood majors have cultivated the market for 'speciality films' in the US and effectively closed off many of the openings for both foreign-language films and English-language films produced in Europe without US support.

However, while the book rightly lays emphasis upon the economic aspects of Hollywood's domination of Europe, it is also careful to avoid what co-editor Geoffrey Nowell-Smith describes as the 'one-sided' character of 'purely economic rhetoric', and to lay stress on the ways in which economic issues are 'intimately inter-connected' with cultural ones (p. 2). Indeed, as Jeancolas clearly shows in his discussion of the GATT talks, finally concluded in 1993, what began as an economic debate was conducted – at least by the French – in terms that were largely cultural.

However, if the book is concerned to give due recognition to cultural matters, it is also aware of the inadequacy of the terrain on which much of the debate around European cinema and Hollywood has historically taken place. For if the question of culture came to the fore in the GATT talks, it did so in terms of a relatively simplistic opposition between an 'invading' 'American' culture on the one hand and a 'threatened' 'European' culture on the other. Such stark oppositions, however, not only attribute a spurious homogeneity to American and European cultures, but fail to acknowledge the complex cultural interactions between the two. Thus, in her discussion of 'European cinema and the idea of Europe', Victoria de Grazia stresses the historical struggles and conflicts that have characterized the definition of 'European identity', and welcomes the idea of 'European identity and culture' characterized by 'cultural diversity and innovation' (pp. 30–31). In doing so, she also notes how invocations of a 'notion of Europe or Europeanness' have characteristically mimicked nationalist appeals to a national culture and identity in the way that they have reproduced cultural hierarchies and suppressed various differences of class, gender, ethnicity and region. Other contributors share this scepticism towards a rhetoric of cultural defence premissed upon nationalist sentiment. Thus, in his discussion of British responses to 'Americanization' (as in the critical uproar surrounding the appearance of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* in 1948), Richard Maltby argues that critics not only drew upon an elite notion of culture but an 'invented "traditional" national culture' as well (p. 105). Likewise, for Peter Wollen the 'French notion that culture needs to be defended' has been wrong-headed and has depended on

a notion of 'national culture' that is not only 'mythologising' but also 'self-mutilating' in so far as it has encouraged the creation of national 'shibboleths and stereotypes' (p. 133). Indeed, it is by now a well-worn argument that Hollywood has often played a 'progressive' role in destabilizing cultural hierarchies in Europe and it is only to be expected that a group of writers, many of whom were themselves responsible for writing about Hollywood films in a way that went against the grain of traditional British film criticism, should be wary of uncritical endorsements of European culture and simplistic appeals to ideas of national and European unity.

As this sympathetic interest in Hollywood films would also suggest, it is not only the idea of a shared European or national culture that is problematic for the book's contributors, but also the idea that Hollywood films should be regarded as unproblematically American or 'other'. For while Hollywood may have successfully provided the USA with some of its most powerful myths (and exported these around the world) it was nonetheless the creation of – mainly European – outsiders, and has continued not only to attract European filmmakers but also to soak up European artistic and cultural influences. Janet Bergstrom, in this respect, provides an illuminating case-study of how three French directors – René Clair, Julien Duvivier and Jean Renoir – fared in Hollywood, while Geoffrey Nowell-Smith considers the contribution of European actors to American filmmaking (and the images of Europeanness with which they were associated). Peter Wollen – in a discussion of 'proletarian drama' in both Hollywood and Britain – and Laura Mulvey – in a comparison of *Celine and Julie Go Boating* (Jacques Rivette, 1974) with *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Susan Seidelman, 1985) – also indicate some of the ways in which Hollywood has made European ideas its own by assimilating and adapting European aesthetic models. This process of adaptation and assimilation, of course, has not been a one-way process, and the book also discusses – as in Thomas Elsaesser's (re-printed) piece on New German Cinema – some of the ways in which the massive presence of Hollywood in Europe has stimulated the creativity of European filmmakers. Indeed, for Wollen it is precisely this activity of cultural appropriation, rather than cultural defence, that suggests how European filmmaking may sustain its 'critical and estranging' role (p. 134). However, while the other contributors to the book would – by and large – share these sentiments, it is not always apparent on what economic and political basis such a cinema is to be predicated. In this respect there remains, despite the editors' best intentions, a degree of isolation of the book's critical concerns with cultural exchange and hybridity from the 'hard' analysis of economic processes (and their effects) found elsewhere in the volume.

It could also be argued that, in subjecting the notion of European culture to scrutiny, the book's understanding of Europe is itself too

narrow. It is primarily concerned with four of the biggest European cinemas – France, Italy, Germany and Britain – and has little to say about cinemas in other European countries. In recent years, the most dramatic extension of Hollywood's power has been in Eastern and Central Europe, and it would have been valuable to have had some reflection on these developments and their consequences. Moreover, within Western Europe the history of European cinema has been remarkably uneven, and certain of the smaller European countries (such as Ireland or Portugal) have never enjoyed the kind of industry or cinema which was characteristic of their larger European neighbours. To identify the 'crisis' of European cinema with the 'collapse' of the industries in the big filmmaking countries is to overlook the much wider problem that the majority of European countries (and regions) have always faced. In this respect, for all its sensitivity to plurality and difference, the book's focus inevitably pulls it away from the 'margins' of European (film) culture and reproduces what might be considered a rather traditional sense of cultural importance and hierarchy within Europe.

review:

Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 338 pp.

JIM HILLIER

With this book (and also Jon Lewis's recent edited collection)[1] a period of concerted serious thinking about 'New Hollywood' may be beginning (though Lewis's – I think usefully – casts its net wider than Hollywood to include clearly 'independent' and avant-garde work such as that of John Cassavetes, Peggy Ahwesh, Su Friedrich and Leslie Thornton, even if its main focus, like Neale's and Smith's, is more obviously on 'Hollywood').

However, terminology poses an immediate problem, as authors and editors all agree and spend much time elaborating. What is 'Hollywood' now? Back in the period of the 'studio system' it seemed easier to know what we were dealing with, but now 'Hollywood' is so enmeshed with other media and other economic activities that what constitutes it cannot be so easily isolated. Certainly, there is no point in talking about Hollywood's movies, its 'software', unless television, cable and so on are included in terms of production and distribution.

Even supposing that we can distinguish what might be New Hollywood from (Old) Hollywood, where might 'new' begin? Leaving aside the question of whether the studio system itself, from the mid 1920s to the mid 1940s – what now seems an astonishingly short period, given the sense of longevity and solidity which the term 'studio system' tends to engender in our minds – was ever particularly settled or stable, this still leaves major questions about when we should date 'new' from. Questions of periodization

1 Jon Lewis (ed.), *The New American Cinema* (Durham, NC Duke University Press, 1998).

preoccupy both the editors in their introduction and several of the authors, especially contributors to the first two parts of the book (Murray Smith and Richard Maltby on 'Hollywood historiography' and Douglas Gomery, Tino Balio and Justin Wyatt on 'Economics, industry and institutions'). Does New Hollywood date from the period of the Paramount decree (1948)? Or from the growth of so-called 'independent production' in the 1950s which resulted from it (though, of course, there was in some ways comparable 'independent' – that is to say, not *really* independent – production before this)? Or from the period of the completion of the divorce decrees in the late 1950s? Or from the first phase of 'conglomeration' in the 1960s? Or from the crisis in production, distribution and audience of the late 1960s and early 1970s? Or from the advent of new marketing, distribution and exhibition strategies usually associated with movies like *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1972) and *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) in the 1970s? Or from the newer phases of conglomeration and media empires in the 1980s and 1990s? Or from all the above, accumulated, taking us back perhaps to the end of the period of supposed stability of the studio system, a very long period of change and crisis?

All these questions are, of course, posed primarily in industrial and economic terms, and to the extent that the book is concerned with answers to questions about periodization – which it sets out quite clearly in its introduction – it is the writers on industrial issues who have the clearest answers (and, in some cases, questions). Maltby, Gomery and Balio build very usefully upon both their own earlier work (such as Balio's 1990 edited volume, *Hollywood in the Age of Television* and Gomery's 1992 *Shared Pleasures*) and that of Thomas Schatz (in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*), Michelle Hilmes (*Hollywood and Broadcasting*) and Janet Wasko (*Hollywood in the Information Age*), and offer very clear accounts of the key structural changes in the industry. Gomery constructs his (very convincing) account of change around the innovations of Lew Wasserman of MCA/Universal in the 1950s and 1960s, with independent production for film and television, and later the blockbuster strategy with *Jaws* and others, and Steven J. Ross of Warner Bros and Time Warner in the 1970s and 1980s, constructing the prototype modern media conglomerate. Even here, though, certainties and clarity are not that easy to come by. Balio, for instance, concludes his discussion of Viacom-Paramount with a description of Sumner Redstone disposing of various entertainment outlets, quoting the *New York Times* positively to the effect of Viacom apparently deciding that 'entertainment "content" – that is, programming – drives the entertainment business – not distribution'. But, as we know, in early September 1999, Viacom bid $36bn for the CBS Television network in an attempt to construct by far the largest media conglomerate.

The problem, as always, is how to move from the apparent

clarities of the economic and industrial to less concrete questions of film style. Justin Wyatt's otherwise very useful essay on Miramax, New Line and the new Hollywood, for example, fails to say much of interest about the relation between the economics and the ideological work of *sex, lies and videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989) and *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), though it tries. Moving more towards questions about style, there are some discussions about new technologies and their impact on aesthetics – Michael Allen on technological developments, Gianluca Sergi on sound and Steve Neale on widescreen composition in the age of television – which are all interesting in themselves but do not seem to take us very far towards what might constitute a postclassical style. If we are trying to identify and define a *post*-classical style, then we have to accept the proposition that there was or is such a thing as a *classical* style, against which a postclassical might be elaborated. The ghost that haunts much of *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, inevitably, is *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*.[2] Even if Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson were fundamentally right both in positing a 'classical' and in suggesting that basic features of that classical persist today – and on both counts they were surely right – it is also clear that neither the classical conventions nor the fictional feature itself were as dominant in the filmgoing experience as they suggested. This is an issue which several contributors approach from a variety of angles, not least Elizabeth Cowie in her essay on storytelling in classical Hollywood cinema, in which she tries 'to find a way to challenge the hegemony of [Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson's] account of classical narrative', though she does not take us very far towards what might be postclassical.

In many ways the best attempt at defining what contemporary Hollywood cinema might be is Thomas Elsaesser's typically brilliant and synthesizing essay on Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) – with the proviso, of course, that *Bram Stoker's Dracula* can surely not be taken as typical of 'contemporary Hollywood cinema' (if, indeed, there is a 'typical'). Elsaesser's essay also has the virtue of reminding us that important work on postclassical Hollywood has already been undertaken very usefully, in diverse ways, by writers such as Robert Ray, Robin Wood and Tim Corrigan, for example, paraphrasing Ray's formulation that success in the New Hollywood 'has to do with a double inscription of audiences, where the viewer is simultaneously addressed as a naive and an ironic spectator, as an innocent and a knowing one' (p. 193).

Quite a lot of the essays in this volume betray their origins as conference papers for the 1995 conference on contemporary Hollywood cinema at the University of Kent, in the sense that they are brief, often very speculative (though not necessarily the worse for that) and tend to conclude with an admission of how much more still

2 David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

needs to be done. There is some unevenness in 'reach', with some papers feeling more reworked for publication than others. Such a volume, particularly one with such origins and such a range of writers and approaches, cannot really aspire to be a coherent and systematic introduction to contemporary Hollywood – though this is more true of the economic, industrial and institutional contributions, including a very refreshing piece on the economics of independent cinema by practitioner James Schamus, screenwriter of films like *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Ang Lee, 1994) and *The Ice Storm* (Ang Lee, 1997) and producer of *Poison* (Todd Haynes, 1997) and *Swoon* (Tom Kalin, 1992). All the same, several essays, such as Tommy Lott on Hollywood and independent black cinema – arguing the need to see the dichotomy between 'independent' and 'studio' as very flexible – and Barry Keith Grant on 'yuppie' horror movies, can serve as very useful introductions to their areas.

It is a striking fact that very few contributors to the volume (with the possible exceptions of Peter Krämer, on family-adventure movies, Hilary Radner, on *Terminator 2* [James Cameron, 1991] and *Fargo* [Joel Cohen, 1996], and maybe – and it is significant that it is often very difficult to tell – Thomas Elsaesser, on *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Warren Buckland, on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* [Steven Spielberg, 1981], and Steven Cohan on *Basic Instinct* [Paul Verhoeven, 1992]) can find much to *like* or think it worth spending much time on in the last twenty-five to thirty years of Hollywood's output. Contributors seem generally more excited by developments in technology or, particularly, industrial and financial changes. In this respect, though he denies subscribing to the 'great man' theory, Gomery's account of industrial and management changes via Lew Wasserman and Steven Ross makes their stories more exciting than most movie plots, giving them heroic qualities, almost the material for biopics. In the introduction to his edited volume (pp. 2–3), Jon Lewis puts his position on this question more explicitly than any of the contributors to the Neale and Smith volume, but some basic attitudes and perceptions are clearly shared:

> Lately I have found it necessary to stop focusing on *important* films and filmmakers as if they matter much anymore. Instead, I have begun to look more seriously at the ways in which the movie and money industries overlap and the ways in which the business of making movies now informs, underscores, and underwrites what we see and hear and do with the films in our lives. . . . One can write about film history without ever stopping to talk about specific movies.

Do we mind that film history and Film Studies have come to this? It is part of the real usefulness and interest of Neale's and Smith's volume that it poses such questions.